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NEW

THE WORLD-MENDER

The
WORLD-MENDER

A NOVEL

BY

MAXWELL GRAY pseud. of
Mary Alice Tuttiett
AUTHOR OF "THE SILENCE OF DEAN MAITLAND," ETC.

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK 1916

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SPES UNICA

Arise, lift up your hearts,
O waking millions,
O wearied millions,
With toil oppressed
To Him that worketh ever,
That sleepeth never,
But giveth rest!

FOREWORD

"The World-Mender" was planned and fully sketched a
and in great part written before the war; personal misfo
tune has delayed its revision and completion until now.

MAXWELL GRAY.

BOOK I

SHADOW-PEOPLED INFANCY

CHAPTER I

GEORGE DARRELL lived in the low-browed, thatched cottage half buried in honeysuckle, at the end of the straggling village street, a solitary boy, whose mother died in sorrow of sudden widowhood while giving him premature birth, so that he came orphaned into the world, never to know a mother's tenderness, a father's disciplined kindness, or the character-molding contact of brothers and sisters. There was no playmate to quarrel with in his grandfather's still and orderly cottage, little variety in the narrow, frugal life, few pleasures and only neutral joys.

But though a stranger to caresses, he knew kindness of a stern and practical sort and was happily ignorant of the bitterness of a fireless hearth and breadless board. Five mornings in the week he trod the familiar path to the National School—as it was still called, escaping the reproach of Board by bringing its long-established course into line with government requirements—where he caught quickly, and reeled off glibly by heart, such morsels of fact and date as could be doled out, and was the pride and terror of teachers by his quickness of apprehension and ingenuity in mischief and veiled revolt. He was a pretty, curly-headed rascal with a face of angelic innocence in moments of most complicated devilry, with whom no one was long angry, not even those unfortunates who bore the guilt of his misdeeds, his ways were so winning and his voice so caressing when he chose. He was tall and strong for his age, and subject to fits of fury, during which, unless one was much stronger than he, it was best to avoid him, a course generally followed by his elders,

those at school from the impotence imposed by denial of physical force at the back of that moral suasion to which rebellious youth is so unresponsive without such backing; those at home from fear of battle and still greater fear of defeat—they called it Christian forbearance—and by the time he was nine, stronger or more daring boys than George Darrell were few.

Every evening at the same hour he went to his little hard bed under the thatched roof that kept the house cool in summer and warm in winter—when it did not let the rain in—and slept soundly till morning light brightening through the diamond-framed window waked him, unless the rarer glory of the moon broke through his dreams to fill him with a strange, passionate joy, mixed with wonder, and soon swallowed up again in deep, dreamless abysses of sleep. Every seventh day he woke, sad with the blank dullness of having no school-master to please or torment and no school to lord it over, and began to devise schemes of escape from sundry fatigue duties of scrubbing and polishing required of him in the absence of study. From these he often succeeded in getting off for best part of the day with a snatched hunk of bread and cheese and usually with a retinue of devoted admirers, though he often preferred to be alone with a book, pencil and paper, or only his dreams.

Parents were afraid of him as he grew older; the rector and the school-master considered him as a rival power that had to be reckoned with and approached with diplomacy. Only the rector's wife pitied him and excused or denied his defects.

"You could do anything with that boy," she told her husband one day, among the carnations they were tying up in their pleasant garden shadowed by the church spire, "if you could only get hold of him."

"If," the long-suffering pastor echoed. "First catch your

hare. Only there's nothing but raw, unhewn human nature to get hold of there. George is under no discipline. Dan Grinham hardly knows he has a grandson and probably cares less; his nose is always in the clouds. Poor old Hesba only knows that she has a sturdy young rebel growing as fast as Jack's beanstalk to feed and clothe and keep clean, and that taxes all the energy Dan's laziness leaves her. No master for George but the whim of the moment, which is often so impish that I used to be afraid sometimes that he had never been baptized. And he never would have been but for Hesba. She drew the line there, with the usual result when worms startle people by turning. She was set on having her daughter's child 'respectable' and was not going to have him buried like a dog to please Dan, she said, so he was properly christened at the parish church and 'screamed something dreadful the whole time.' "

"But I thought Hesba was a Baptist, too."

"Well, my dear, that depends on what you call a Baptist, a thing I never properly made out myself. Perhaps Hesba is not alone in mistaking respectability for religion. They both begin with *r*, and if you can't have one it's as well to have the other, one sometimes thinks. Besides, I doubt if Hesba could tell the difference between a Brahmin and a Baptist, except that one wears a hat and the other a turban, and one calls himself a Christian and the other occasionally acts as such."

"But didn't Hesba tell the school-master George was not to learn the Church catechism, and denounce you as a tyrant for poisoning the innocent minds of freeborn Britons with Church stuff?"

"Yes; but that was after George had enlivened a dull hour at home one day by reciting the catechism right through, questions and answers and all in one breath. They told George to forget it, and he had the impudence to come and

ask me to teach him how to forget the catechism, looking like a newly-born angel."

"I hope you boxed his ears."

"If I'd so much as laid a finger on the safest part of him Dan or Hesba or somebody would have had me up before 'his lordship' for assault. Happily there's a good piece born with every child, and he has received baptism, else there is nothing to check or bridle anything that may develop in him. Pity!"

Mr. Hervey held the educational worth of Dan Grinham's preaching in slight esteem; George, on those occasions when he accompanied his grandfather to a neighboring village or sat in the tiny chapel just outside his own to hear him preach, frankly slept or drew pictures in his hymn-book all the time. He would often have done the same under the rector's shorter but stodgier discourses, if some fellow-victim of ecclesiastical tyranny had not always been at hand with pins, kicks, and twisted pinches to remind him of his spiritual obligations.

George rather liked church, chiefly as an escape from chapel. The sermon was shorter, the prayers more practical and diversified, their rhythmic cadence and beautiful words pleased his ear; the singing was more musical and supported by majestic organ thunder; there was frequent change of posture and a definite individual part to play in the responses, while the beauty of ancient and spacious architecture, and the picturesqueness of surplice, stole, and ordered procession, charmed and impressed, and the fuller and more representative congregation, including all ranks for miles round, brought an atmosphere of social warmth and cheerfulness into the house of prayer.

Some of the inscriptions on mural tablets stirred his imagination as great music did in after years:

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather together his elect from the four winds," caught him away, as in the flight of some strong and fleet-

winged angel, to regions of vast and solemn magnificence, filling him with a quivering rapture, mixed with fear and great calm.

One bright Sunday morning, when sunshine, streaming through the robes of majestic prophet and aureoled saint, glowed richly on snowy surplice, pale-gray pillar and arch, and shot athwart the chancel in long beams of misty glory, a young layman read the First Lesson from the huge Bible spread open upon the brazen eagle's wings beneath the chancel arch. He stood against the background of chancel and altar, tall and straight in surplice and cassock, his arms folded across his breast, his clear-cut face gravely beautiful, a long sunbeam making a glory in his fair hair. His voice was musical, he read clearly, with no swallowed vowels or blurred consonants, and proper emphasis and modulation rising and falling on a current of deep, restrained emotion, the drama of Isaac's stolen blessing.

George, among restless little boys on a front school-bench, sat with wide eyes fixed in helpless admiration on the handsome youth and shining eagle and background of sun-shot chancel, still for once as the marble knight praying with uplifted hands on the tomb hard by. The rhythmic cadence of the fine voice lulled him and thrilled him with growing interest, till sun-stained pillar, dim, vaulted roof, long shafts of misty glory and white-robed reader dissolved and vanished in the mystery and strange anguish of the drama. His spirit went hunting with Jacob, dressed the game and schemed with Rebecca, carried the savory meat to the old blind father, longed with unutterable longing for the coveted blessing—whatever that strange thing might mean—and breathed deep relief when the kiss was given at last and the solemn benediction fell like a strain of deep organ music upon the hushed air.

But then came Esau from his hunting, masterful and strong and overflowing with confident joy of life, and

George's little generous heart went out to him with a great throb in his hope, his disappointment, his anguish and his fury.

Yet he was very glad that Jacob had secured the blessing and a little angry with Esau for trying to get it back; but again with Isaac he trembled "very exceedingly" in a confusion of pity, pain, and bewilderment, and when Esau cried with his great and exceeding bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" he turned pale and clenched his teeth hard to keep back the sobs struggling in his throat.

It was no use; out they burst at last with torrents of tears and a child's audible crying; a strong hand from behind clutched and shook him by the collar, another was laid over his mouth and he was dragged ignominiously from his place and hurried choking down the long, matted aisle, conscious through his sobs of the beautiful voice from the lectern and Esau's repeated cry—"Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!"—till the church door clanged behind him and he found himself outside in the silence of the empty churchyard, tossed out with a final shake and cuff on the side of the head and a cordial promise of something to squall for if he carried on any more like that in church. There he lay long, face downward, on a tomb under a yew, pondering on the hard case of Esau, the mysterious anguish and impotence of the old deceived father, the subtlety and anxious affection of Rebecca, the obedience and eager longing of Jacob, neither siding with nor blaming any, and perceiving neither moral nor spiritual significance anywhere, but sorry for all and pleasantly dissolved in a confusion of sweet anguish.

"Whatever was the matter with ee, my dear, to make ee cry like that, in church and all?" a motherly voice asked him later, when the village street was sparsely dotted with groups of home-going church-folk and little George in his too

ample Sunday suit was swinging on the garden gate in pleased anticipation of hot roast pork, appetizing odors of which came through the half-open cottage door. He turned crimson and hung his head. The secret, strange emotion must not be profaned by violence of speech, the rough country urchin, a by-word for cheerful impudence, felt, but had no power to think.

"Have ee got ar a pain anywhere?" kind Mrs. Green, who was the shepherd's wife, went on, failing to extract any reply from the cherry-cheeked sufferer till Hesba Grinham came out, tin dipper in hand, to fetch water from the draw-well bucket, and heard with righteous indignation what had happened in church, while George's face and heart turned to stone.

"No call to shake the bwoy, Mis' Grinham," the shepherd's wife said: "He ain't no age to speak of. Children don't cry that pitiful for nothing. And there's many down in measles round about. Tell grandmother, my dear. Did any of 'em hit ee? or had ee got ar a pain inside of ee?"

"Jarge was never one to squinney, however hard you med hit en," his grandmother admitted, and George, hard put to it, at last confessed to non-existent pains in the region of the waistcoat and was promptly condemned to half-rations of roast pork and a terrific dose of jalap, against which there was no appeal and tears availed nothing.

"Don't ee mind, my dear," kind Mrs. Green said with some remorse at the result of her interference; "swallow it down quick and grandmother'll give ee a spoonful o' honey to take the taste out."—"No fear," he thought dismally, though inspired by this suggestion with a sudden happy plan to snatch a bit of honeycomb from the cupboard shelf ready for the jalap.

Then Mrs. Green went on her way, stepping aside to curtsy to the occupants of a landau and pair from Deerham

Place, who drew up just past the cottage garden to speak to a young man coming by a field path into the road. George recognized the bright head and face under the lifted hat as the lay-reader's, and slipped along inside the garden hedge to listen unashamed to the gentlefolk, who spoke so much more like books than villagers did.

"You really must take orders, Jim," Lady Amberwood said from the carriage: "What a bishop you would make! Odd that clergymen never know how to read aloud. Such a pleasure to hear you read that moving chapter! So tiresome of the school-child to howl in the most poignant passage, and what on earth for? The little wretch had been a model, all eyes and ears and still as a stone, till he suddenly burst out."

"My wife always notices pretty children," Lord Amberwood said.

"Of course, I admire her taste. This little chap is a model for an artist if not for behavior. I spotted him, with his cherub face and great eyes, staring up at me. He looked too good to be true."

"Just what he is. It was that little Darrell, the Baptist preacher's grandson, Gerald," Lady Amberwood told her husband.

"Why, of course; that explains the howl, my dear. A twinge of the Nonconformist conscience."

George wondered why this explanation seemed to amuse the gentlefolk, who returned to the Nonconformist conscience after the young man had accepted an invitation to get in and lunch at Deerham; and when they drove off laughing in the sunshine the last words he caught were Nonconformist conscience, over which he puzzled vainly, staring through the hedge into the sunny road that was empty of any sound or sight beyond the occasional pecking of a bird in the dust and the rustle of light airs in the trees.

"Grandfather," he asked later, when Dan Grinham had come in from what he called his morning's wrestling in the high beechwood on the down, preparatory to the evening's preaching in the chapel, and was taking very kindly to the savory meat before him—just like Isaac, George thought; "—what's the Nonconformist conscience?"

He had spoken as usual at the top of his voice, but instead of his having as usual to repeat the question three or four times before the old man would come out of his dream to answer or command silence, the words, like a lash to a sleepy horse, made Dan Grinham start and look up with an angry flame in his deepset gray eyes.

"Nonconformist conscience?" he cried with broad country o's. "What be ee talken about? Who've ben putten of Nonconformist consciences into your silly head? Take and go on with ee then, listening to what gentlefolk that know no better cackle about in their carriages on the Lord's day. The man that read in church instead of the rector? What do he know about Nonconformists or consciences? One of the Deerham Place lot, taking their pleasure on the Sabbath, eating the game they've reared on the people's food, drinking of wine and eating of birds they've shot men for killing of, filling up the measure of their iniquity, trampling of better men underfoot, grinding the faces of the poor.—Eh? What's this here in my pocket?" he replied to Hesba's question about some feathers sticking out of the coat he had taken off in coming in. "That's just a bird come in my way when I was shooing off Barton's bull with stones up in the Close. Barton had ought to keep that bull of his penned up. 'Tis entirely a danger to human life. I'd forgot the bird. Best put en out of sight, Hesba, till he's fit to dress.—But a day of reckoning is drawing nigh," he added, his eyes growing dreamy again; "the Thunders of Armageddon are rolling in the distance. Then shall the Nonconformist conscience tri-

umph, then shall be an end of mockings and scourgings, and saints shall wash their footsteps in the blood of the ungodly. For there shall be a remnant on the earth and they shall shine even as the sun in his strength."—He paused, looking with unseeing eyes straight before him over the puzzled head of his grandson, who drew from these observations, to the character of which he was well accustomed, the inference that the Nonconformist conscience—he had not the least idea what a Nonconformist meant—was of a superior quality to others and was lodged in his own small breast. Pausing for breath after this outburst and suddenly aware of present surroundings again, the old man put the knife and fork with which he had been emphasizing his discourse to their proper use, with a long sigh and final admonition to George, "Take and eat your dinner, you, and don't ask no more questions without you want a good clout on the head."

George understood from village tales that his grandfather had seen better days and wondered what they were like. The days now visible were quite good enough for him and apparently for everybody else. Still, there was something mysteriously beautiful and elevating in the idea of better days. It threw a halo over the gray head and imparted a light of romance to the dreamy gray eyes, that had seen their strange beauty. Once he asked Hesba what those days were like and where you could find them, and she cried a little and, drying her eyes with her apron, said that they were before ever he was born or thought of. The idea of a period of not having been born, for the first time presented to the mind, was so paralyzing, precipitating the imagination down such infinite descents of nothingness into darkness, and the difficulty of having oneself thought about before one was born so overwhelmingly bewildering, and the whole subject, mixed with grandmother's tears, so full of tragic possibility, that he pursued the inquiry no further.

He had lived many more years and grown a great fellow in his teens before learning that those better days were when Daniel Grinham had been a partner with his father in a small but flourishing tailoring business in a country town, and had taken Hesba, the daughter of a well-to-do working farmer, to a comfortable and well-plenished home, where they had spent many peaceful years and brought up their children and given them the best schooling in the place.

But after his father died Daniel had failed, and came down to this little thatched cottage, bought with his wife's portion and saved from the general wreck. Here he made a precarious livelihood by such custom as the neighborhood afforded and eked it out with various odd jobs and the sale of Hesba's home-made jams and pickles and wine and honey, supplemented now and then at lessening intervals by presents of money from a son in Australia. Poor Dan, his father used to say, would have done well enough if he had been born with bread ready buttered to his hand and no need to work. But Dan had never got over his astonishment at being born at all, nor had he ever been able to find out what kind of a world he had been born into, or had time to look round and find his proper place in it. So, though he was a good chap in himself, he was good for nothing by himself. He could make a coat after it was cut out, if you stood over him, and kept him at it. But trust him to cut it out and he would make two left or two right sleeves and forget the collar. As for any sense of time, he spent one half the day looking for tomorrow morning and the other half trying to pick up yesterday. Instead of measuring customers' bodies for clothes, he was always peeping and peering into the state of their souls, and when they wanted him to try on their coats, he insisted on trying new religious doctrine on them. Dan Grinham, the elder, sat in the Baptist chapel every Sunday of his life and did his duty as an honest, God-fearing man, accord-

ing to his lights; but he was unable to understand the wild views and wayward religious practices of his son, who appeared to him to have a zeal without knowledge, which, whether it furthered his prospects in the world to come or not, was a sad hindrance to his advancement in this one. "My son Dan," he used to say, "would tell a customer he was hurrying along the road to hell, as soon as look at him. Aye! he'd stand with the measuring tape half round the man's body and ask him whether he was saved. I never could knock no sense into the bwoy; he was that wanting, poor chap. But a good worker, so long as you stand over him. Some is born to hold the bridle and some to wear the bit. Some is made to go of theirselves like dogs, and some to be driven like sheep."

"Poor Dan" was used to hear these remarks as one who heard not, and when his father died and the customers melted away till the day of failure came and the shutters were put up, attributed the disaster to anything but his own defects. He was persecuted for conscience' sake; the children of this world—people who ought to have bought the clothes he made —hated the children of light, otherwise Dan Grinham, who wanted to sell them. Hesba was nearer the mark when she said the failure was due to the many more trains, that took people to the big towns, and the machine-made slops, that undersold the hand-made work and killed the small businesses. But poor Dan was always a victim from birth, in his own estimation. People never gave him a chance. His sons, after all their good schooling, refused his trade. One, weary of steady monotony in the Post Office, where he was doing well, went to Australia and did fairly well on a sheep farm. Another, discontented with the clerking in a lawyer's office, went to South Africa and was killed in the first Boer War. Another went to the bad and disappeared no one knew where. "All these things," poor Dan quoted,

"are against *me*," and his heart grew bitter. Hesba's heart grew bitter, too; but she said nothing and shed many tears in secret. And always there was for her the one bright spot in life—Nellie, the only girl. But she was "only a girl," Dan thought, and took her good behavior and sweetness as a matter of course. Nellie chose to be trained as a hospital nurse, and they were proud of her when she came home in her neat uniform, looking prettier and gayer than ever in that prim garb, with her Savings Bank book and her plans and hopes and interests. Not long after old Dan Grinham's death came Nellie's engagement and brilliant marriage with the mate of a vessel in the merchant service. But in his first voyage after the marriage George Darrell was killed in an encounter with Chinese pirates, and little George, untimely born, and unwelcome, was the cause of his mother's death.

Then it was that Hesba's heart turned to stone and the unwanted child gave her no pleasure and her stern religion scanty comfort. Then Dan's became wilder and more fanatic than ever, and the little mission chapel planted by the Baptists in the village, losing the minister who had served it, just as the Grinhams came to the cottage, and no trained man being available, Dan Grinham was put in temporary charge and attracted a certain number by his emotional preaching.

Perhaps it was unfortunate for the child of this austere and joyless home, that even when the grandparents began to forgive him their daughter's death and natural affection took the kinder way of opening their hearts to her motherless boy, their religion moved them to conceal those warmer emotions and restrain all indulgence and expression of affection, for fear of spoiling or, as they thought, idolizing him, and he grew from an infancy uncaressed to a repressed and rebellious boyhood, always with the feeling that he was an undesired burden, even a reproach, to those who reared him with harsh words and grudging kindness.

CHAPTER II

IN the infinite sapphire arched above a broad blue band of sea, a lark hung singing, its fluttering wings steeped in sunlight, its nest, hidden in tufted grass, near the edge of Deersleap Cliff that rose dazzling white in strong sun sheer from the sea. It was like a star, George Darrell thought, like a star in the twinkle of its fluttering wings and the clear, silvery rapture of its song. He had trapped and killed many birds, a lark never. You could not kill a lark; it made you so glad and gay with its wild, whirling music, that grew madder and madder in thick, quick ecstasy, till it had to stop and drop like a stone. Lying on the soft springy turf, face upwards, overarched and encompassed by the vast blue purity, with the lulling murmur of breaking surf keeping a continuous response to the bird's song, you left off being a boy, and went up into the clear deep azure with the lark's music and became part of the soaring rapture, the infinite space and illimitable air. Pleasant smells of thyme and crushed turf, salt sea-air and sea-weed went up and up, circling and growing stronger with the ever-mounting spirals of the song, till all stopped and you were lying on the grass again and the sky was empty and there was no sound but that soft, hushing boom of surf curling below and the occasional low thunder of seas breaking far into caves tunneled in the cliff.

Some years had passed since the magic of cadenced phrase and musical voice, with the deep human pathos of the supplanted son's despair, had moved George's child heart beyond his understanding. He was a strong, tall boy in his teens

now, but he had not forgotten that deep stirring of heart or his own passionate sympathy or the reader's beautiful face and well-knit figure and the romance encompassing him. The Oxford graduate's fine presence and voice pervaded his day-dreams for years; he became the type of all that was beautiful, noble, and knightly in mankind; his form and features were worn by every young hero, saint, or warrior known to him; even the angels by the Easter tomb, as well as the Christian of his grandfather's "Pilgrim's Progress," had the fair hair, clear-cut features, and deeply moving voice of the young man standing at the lectern in the sunbeam that far-off Sunday morning.

Delightful to lie on that couch of living verdure cresting the bastion upreared from the vast sea, whose hushed thunders broke so gently, yet with such suggestion of restrained power and fury, at the foot of the steep. Who would think that sweet, soft azure could rise roaring and raging from the velvet surface to hurl itself in green masses and clouds of flying spume up the face of the cliff, scattering spray and pebbles far over the grassy summit or that it could take, as George had once seen, a tall ship like a toy in its fierce grasp and dash it again and again in mad merriment upon the cliff face, till nothing but bits of snapped mast and broken timber was left for the cruel crests to toss and toy with in their savage mirth? He turned over on his face, his elbows planted in the turf, his head on his hands, and gazed far out to sea, with a joy denied often to kings' sons swelling in his heart, at the sight of this sunny splendor. Far on the horizon a brig loomed faint and fairy-like, her white canvas azure-shadowed in the sun. Nearer, the long gray hull of a battleship under a dark smoke-plume glided, grim and terrible, and here were white-winged yachts and saucy little fishing-smacks. "There go the ships: there is that leviathan," he murmured, and a longing that was half joy and part pain and part bewilder-

ment moved him. "They that go down to the sea in ships" were to be envied. He felt the strong pulses of coming manhood stirring in his blood; every day he grew stronger and bigger. And they thought they were going to keep him in that narrow spot, chained to some day labor, minding sheep, following the plow, at best teaching in a village school, crushed like his grandfather and Sam Welland, the evicted farmer, and those hard-working, hard-living, slave-souled cottagers, under toils and privations put upon them by the tyranny of the selfish, luxurious rich—this was Dan Grinham's social creed—the parson, the squire. He thought of his unknown, gallant father, dying gloriously in that fierce struggle with pirates. That was the life, and the death, too, for his son.

No pirates here, and only legends of smugglers' half-forgotten deeds of dark nights. If they would only let him go to sea. Why not go? What strange, rich regions of romance and adventure lay beyond that soft sea-rim! And close at hand, just round the lighthouse point, past the gun-bristled fort, was the stirring, unknown life of a naval port, with arsenal, garrison, and harbor crowded with warships. But he had never been farther from home than the little market town. Well! the day would come.

Fancy creeping on board one of the great outward-bound liners at dusk and lying hidden till she was far out at sea and the land long left out of sight. He was an admiral, gorgeous in blue and gold, issuing short, stern commands from the deck of a steel-sheathed battleship, a whole fleet in his train, steaming, steaming, through battle and storm, the wide world over. Or commanding a huge liner, carrying a city's population, every life of them in his hand. Or even on such a ship as that yonder on the sunny horizon, full-sailed, faint as gossamer, seeking new worlds. His geography was vague, but the school-maps showed vacant and presumably un-

discovered regions, in which imagination could wander free.

A lark shot suddenly up into the blue on a rippling flood of singing; another followed and another; all the air was tremulous with confused, rapturous music eddying and overflowing like wine from a golden cup; swallows dipped with breezy twittering from the cliff, white sea-gulls swept light as foam over the slumberous blue or settled and swayed on the faint lulling rhythm of the wavelets. Through all he heard the clash of arms, the shock of warring multitudes, shouts, bugle-calls, the boom of heavy guns. "All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" lay beyond the tranquil sea.

The lark music stopped; sheep-bells tinkled faintly. Perhaps David was beginning to sicken of such bells when he was taken from among the sheep-folds and anointed King. He took out a pipe made of hollowed elder, blew some soft notes, too few to make a tune, and began to consider how to get at a sea-bird's nest half-way down the cliff. He remembered some rope left by the coastguard, a little way off, where the cliff-top sank and the steep was lower. There was an iron staple fixed somewhere near; how was it to be got out of its place and made fast above the nest? These coastguards were always about. They saw far too much; they were almost as bad as gamekeepers.

Yes; there was a footstep. He listened without turning, motionless, looking straight out to sea, alert as a cat pretending not to be watching a bird; but the step was too light and quick for a coastguard. He turned with a flash of joy over his face to see the slight running figure of a boy of his own age, who came up with an answering light of gladness in his eyes and flung himself on the turf by his side.

"Hullo, Darrell!" he cried.

"Hullo!" growled George, turning back, and both lay face downward looking out to sea, silent, happy as kings.

George had been trying to spur up his pride and not give way to the class humility his grandfather condemned—though he sometimes preached a kind he called Christian to be exclusively applied to individuals; Hugh, on the contrary, had been trying, as he walked whistling along the lanes and copses, not to be too proud, and especially not to show that he was proud, of the glorious fact that in a few weeks he was going to Eton. To this he had known himself destined from his cradle, and all his schooling and life had led up to this climax. But however sure one may be of eventually reaching a summit, the moment of reaching it has an ecstatic thrill, and he had reached his desired height more quickly than had been expected. He was not a brilliant boy; his father even thought him dull, at best a steady plodder. Yet the master of the preparatory school had given an excellent report of him and said kind things to him personally about his batting, and he saw himself in a glorious future winner of his house and eventually school colors. Imagination even soared as high as the green plain of Lords, where parents and friends and lovely ladies in summer frocks looked on while he upheld the credit of his house, of his school, perhaps—for strange things have happened—even of his university. With a thrill of proud joy he remembered the last school match, when his father had tried not to look as if he knew *whose* father he was, and his mother nearly, very nearly, cried with joy and pride.

But when George Darrell presently condescended to ask him, "What cheer?" the great tidings scarcely seemed to impress him. He even asked if Eton was a "boarding-school," like the other one, and whether Hugh was not "nearly done with school," as he was, having passed every standard; and, beyond the fact that the chaps at Eton were older, he could not be brought to see much difference or any glory in the change. He wished to know what the school

made a man fit for, and learned with surprise and interest that poverty and low birth were no bar to entrance under certain conditions, which he thought tyrannous because impossible to himself, of winning scholarships; and, while failing to take in the school's high standard in games, he showed what Hugh thought an almost indecent interest in the studies. Nevertheless each boy was generously tolerant of the other's deficiencies as being inherent to the class and not the individual.

But the sea-bird's nest was ground of common interest. They went to the brink of the cliff and looked over at it and considered how to take it, without arriving at any decision. Then they stood still on the edge, silently thinking over their plans, hands in pockets, Hugh with his back to the sea, George facing it, when a gull, circling unseen above them, suddenly swooped with a cry so near that the wind of its wings swept their faces and they each started back, Hugh to the extreme cliff-edge, where matted grass-roots, carrying their own soil, projected over the firm chalk wall and gave way under his sudden bound. George saw him a moment with wildly waved arms thrown out; then he vanished, clutching at the crumbling cliff edge, with only his clinging hands visible; there he hung by his arms, his feet braced against the cliff that went sheer as a wall down to the curling, softly murmuring surf, hundreds of feet below.

Between crumbling cliff and creeping surf there was nothing but that quivering hand-clutch and the strained pressure of feet against the continually slipping chalk. Hugh's stretched arms could hardly hold on, much less lift his body; by the increasing quiver of aching muscles he knew that a very few minutes would end all. Pebbles gave way under hands and feet; he heard them tap against projecting roughnesses in the cliff as they fell, reaching the water with a tiny plash. The blue vault above was still overflowing with the

lark's joyous music; the white cliff wall dazzled his eyes that would see nothing any more—neither green woods, nor golden fields, nor the breezy downland dotted with sheep, that he had climbed with such a light heart and step a moment since. The bright future, the boyish ambitions so vivid then were nothing now. The few sins of his brief life and all he had ever done flashed in a moment by—things forgotten, joys and terrors of infancy, a dead baby brother, the first day at school, the holiday home-comings, his mother's kiss of welcome, and George—how he had loved George! Bleeding hands and quivering feet driven into the chalk were numbing fast; it must end now—a brief rush through the air, a splash, and that unknown, dark nothingness. But one short heart-wrung cry to Heaven for father and mother first, and the thought that Cecil would fill his place; then the vanishing world spun round and whirled more and more rapidly in the surf's low crooning and the lark's mad music, till that clear, shouting voice telling him to hold on brought a pause, and then out of the blue heaven George's face shot like a bird and something closed round him and held him safe and still.

When George saw Hugh's bright head disappear, flame went through him and sudden calm extinguished all feeling and quickened thought. There was no time to call for help, even if a living soul had been within hearing. He could never pull Hugh up by the wrists with no fulcrum but his own body flat on the turf. To bend far enough over the cliff edge to get his arms under Hugh's shoulders would be to send both to the bottom with the strong pull downward. This and the exact place of the coastguard's rope and the way to use it and the measure of time to fetch it came to him in the first flash, and he was flying rather than running—crying, "Hold on! I'm getting a rope"—like live lightning over the slippery slope to the turf of gorse where he had seen it, and back

again with the coil in his hand and wild, glad feelings of power in his heart, adjusting and deciding how to place the slip-knot as he flew.

There was only one way—he had seen it done by samphire-gatherers and copied it from a safe height with many falls. This time there could be only one fall. But he was not going to fall. You could do anything if you only willed it hard enough. If Hugh squirmed or clutched at him? He should not squirm. If he left hold of the cliff before George was back? He should not leave hold. He willed it otherwise. Only he must be quicker than quick.

With one end of the rope wound round his body, the slip-knot in one hand and the slack held free, he let himself face downward over the brink, pressing his toes well into the turf, and so hung by his feet near enough to Hugh to pass the slip-knot over his feet one at a time as each was detached from the cliff, and so round his body. This was the worst moment, if there was more than one moment in the whole breathless business. But George was quick and agile as a cat, and Hugh's exhausted brain, steadied by his calm and duteous courage, quickly perceived George's aim and he hung passive and still, quivering with the strain in every muscle, till George had slithered up and disappeared above the cliff and half-rolled and half-crawled some feet from the edge, when the last quiver left Hugh's strained muscles and he hung limp and nerveless in the rope, with a sudden tension upon it that sank him a foot lower and pulled George the same distance towards the edge, before he was able, with his whole weight thrown back and pulling hand over hand, to haul him high enough to get his elbows on the turf, and, soon after that, his knees. Then the exhausting strain and the pressure of the rope overcame Hugh, and he crouched forward senseless in a heap, his feet still over the edge.

It was easy then to loosen the knot, drag him clear of the

cliff edge and lay him on his back with a rolled jacket under his head; and, having slapped his white face and fanned him with his cap, George, breathing hard and streaming at every pore, lay propping his own head on his arms, watching the return of the life he had snatched from the sea, with victorious joy and confidence in himself. How many could or would have done it? Well! he could do anything he set his will to. The surf was creeping higher under that impulse which hand of man and all his science can never stay; there was menace in its deepening murmur on the rocks and an angrier thunder in its intermittent plunge through the caves; sea-weed and floating drift were in the spume that roared over hidden reefs below—so Hugh's body and his would have been tossed but for his quick and daring spring; the great deep, balked of her prey, was angry.

Yes; he could do anything. He was sure now that danger and difficulty would always steady and inspire him and bring him calm and clear, quick thought. He had saved him—by a hair-streak, as few would have dared—saved Hugh. Strange and wonderful was his love for this boy, like Jonathan's, passing the love of woman, sacred, mysterious, and now more sacred and mysterious because of this wrestle with death for him; not to be put into words, hardly even into thought.

Then, at last, Hugh, opening his brave blue eyes with a little sigh and faint color in his bleeding cheeks, looked up with admiration and wonder into George's strong, ruddy-brown face and loved him with a love deep and strong and lasting as life.

"Now then, buck up, look alive, man, look alive," growled George, meeting and understanding the look that was better than life to him. And all Hugh said by way of thanks was:

"I say! You just *are* a ripper and no mistake."

CHAPTER III

THE boys never spoke of their adventure on Deersleap Cliff. Hugh's bruised face and bleeding hands were easily attributed to scrambling over the rocks and held of no account, though the various strains and scarifications stopped his cricket for the season.

He went to a home George thought a palace, to clean and fine linen, a warm bath, warm sympathy, sumptuous fare and household gayety; George to a narrow cottage, a dinner of herbs, and sharp scolding for tearing his clothes and leaving his grandmother to scrub and polish and fill kettles and peel potatoes for Sunday's dinner, while he hiked off pleasuring and getting into mischief half the day. Both boys were supremely happy that evening, but Hugh's happiness was nothing in comparison with George's victorious joy, which was spoiled by no shadow of remorse for these neglected household functions, that he contemptuously accounted women's work. Besides, he had passed the forenoon in servile toil of this kind and it had not occurred to him that the overworked woman grown old and feeble in mothering him had any right to his services. Still less had he observed that besides cooking and washing and keeping the cottage clean, poor old Hesba had always been the chief breadwinner of the family; for Dan's tailoring was too sparse and spasmodic to keep the pot boiling, and his share of the garden work by no means the lion's.

It was Hesba's bees and fowls, her jams, pickles, wines, and herb mixtures, her fruit and vegetables, her winter needlework and occasional days of charing, that really kept the

wolf from the door. Even the pigs were more in her charge than Dan's, though he often served them at her command, never remembering their meal-times of himself. Nor could he be trusted to take the donkey and cart to market and sell the produce and bring back the things he was to buy in exchange. Unless George or Hesba went with him, half the stuff to sell came back and most of the things to buy were forgotten. Lists taken were lost or unread. Once even the donkey was lost, cart and produce and all; Dan had tied it to the gate of a friend of congenial theological views, during a visit of some duration, and came out without observing that the patient animal had disappeared—thanks to the charity of some boy aching for fresh pastime—until he drew near the town, when it suddenly struck him that he had left something behind somewhere. It had been a day of great refreshment he afterwards told Hesba, who, though anything but refreshed by the occurrence herself, dutifully attributed Dan's peculiarities to his being what she called a Mary, incessantly occupied in high spiritual contemplation, while she, poor sinful soul, a mere Martha, was careful and troubled about many things and her body all twisted and gnarled and worn with the toil of doing what Dan left undone as well as her own special work. Dan's father, while giving him due credit for being preoccupied with spiritual things, had seen a good portion of invincible indolence and a mental defect he called being only half-saved in poor Dan's aloofness from everyday duties.

But on the occasion of the donkey's total disappearance with all the eggs and fowls and garden stuff she depended upon for the week's victualing, Hesba was so much troubled and showed such a disposition to murmur, that Dan made her want of faith the subject of his Sunday discourse, privately rebuking her with asperity and straitly commanding her to leave the donkey and the stuff to the Lord, as he

himself always did. A very sharp and far from respectful retort was upon Hesba's lips and hot tears in her eyes, when a familiar slow patter of feet was heard on the road, and through the fast-falling twilight two long and hairy ears were seen nodding, and the patient face and meek eyes of the lost beast appeared, wistfully questioning and sadly in want of supper, at the window, thereby pointing Dan's moral and adorning his tale. Behind the donkey there was a cart, slightly damaged, and quite empty.

Hesba had always, secretly, though she feared impiously, hoped that there would be a good strain of Martha in her grandson, so that as years weighed more heavily on her the burden of her toils might be lightened; yet here was George, well in his teens, healthy, strong, and well-grown, with all his wits about him, earning nothing and kicking against housework. Dan professed to teach him the tailoring; but, besides the vague and intermittent character of his instruction, which consisted chiefly in telling him to heat the goose when he wanted it and sew odds and ends of cloth together now and then, George had no vocation for tailoring and once had his ears boxed for disrespectful allusion to the ninth part of a man. Nor would he have anything to do with farm labor, or work in the forge or the carpenter's shop, unless properly apprenticed, and even that he cared little for. He was just now filling in the time as a pupil-teacher till something better turned up.

His friendship with Hugh Mascott began when the boys were about ten years old. George was spending a Saturday afternoon in one of his solitary moods, wandering in the woods near Deerham Place, where, according to a keeper who was chasing him, he had no business to be. So Hugh, who had fallen in with the keeper, heard but did not believe. George had dodged the keeper cleverly in the underwood, doubling like a hare, and at last shinning up a smooth beech-

bole and hiding in the thick of the boughs. But as the keeper had seen him go up the trunk he knew he must be somewhere in the leafy crown, which he bombarded steadily with sticks and blocks of wood and even stones. Hugh said it was not fair; the tree ought to be considered out of bounds; the boy ought to be given his chance after such a good run. Besides, there was no proof of poaching or any misdemeanor.

Then, probably out of sheer devilry and desire to show off before another boy, George came out of his covert, ran along a high branch like a squirrel and took a flying leap into another beech-top, to the stupefied admiration and delight of Hugh. There he caught the end of a bough and clung to it, tossed and swung like a pendulum by the sudden impulse of his leap, till he lost his breath by getting knocked against a great outstanding limb, and creeping dizzily along the branch nearest to the trunk, half climbed and half tumbled from branch to branch till he dropped with a thud exhausted on the mossed ground at the foot of the tree.

The keeper pounced like a cat upon the gasping child, and, bringing out and fingering a tough ash-bough cut on purpose, was about to execute justice, and, as he said, "to larn the poaching young varmint to come sneaking about his covers."

"No, you don't, Kirby," cried Hugh, springing before him. "It's so beastly cowardly," he said; "the fellow is hurt and helpless and you've no proof that he's been poaching. He hasn't even a gun or a snare on him. Trespassing, is he? Well, warn him off then. Look here, young un, you're out of bounds, and you mustn't do it again. This is our land. But I say, that was a ripping jump of yours."

"Well then, Master Hugh, you must answer to his lordship then. Only just you let me search him. No fear, I won't lay a hand on him, not to hurt, sir. But just you see what you'll see in the pockets of him."

And what Hugh saw, to the surprise and discomfiture of

the honest guardian of the wood, was a stained, colored handkerchief, some odds and ends of string, two sticky bull's-eyes, a knife, some knuckle bones, an empty match-box, and a jew's harp, treasures anxiously watched by their owner, who divined the keeper's intention, frustrated by Hugh, of throwing them collectively into the brushwood. All the time George was congratulating himself on having committed a catapult, a snare, a pigeon, and a partridge to a hole in the beech-trunk, whence he took them some days later.

"I think, Kirby, we should apologize for suspecting this honest boy," Hugh said, pointing to these spoils of war.

"Honest be blowed, sir. You may lay what you like he's been up to sommat. Why, it's that young Darrell—an impudent young——"

"Then I apologize to Darrell. I'm afraid we brought you down, Darrell. And I say, you just *can* jump. You are not hurt?"

"No fear," he said sturdily, though his body was one solid ache and he pulled himself very stiffly to his feet, drying his pale forehead with the handkerchief Hugh gave him.

"Well, just to show there's no ill-feeling—I like the look of that knife of yours"—a cheap, single-bladed thing, hardly sharp enough to cut new cheese. "Let's swap." He held out a knife that made George's eyes glisten, with four shining blades, a corkscrew and a file, and thus laid the foundation of a life's friendship.

" 'The earth and the fullness thereof' is the Lord's and not 'slordship's," was an often repeated article in Dan Grinham's creed, too implicitly accepted by, and rooted in, the mind of his grandson, to allow him any scruple in invading the Deerham coverts and ransacking the plantations whenever he liked; the fact that average mortals held it unlawful gave it a spice of joyous excitement. And the fact of Hugh being " 'slordship's" son and heir imparted a flavor of romance to

his honest and enduring affection for him, which was still more enhanced by the clandestine character of their rare and chancy intercourse. The friendship had not been many months old when Hugh, who was spending summer holidays at Deerham Place, had to be isolated for an attack of scarlet fever, not bad enough to prevent mortal dullness but sharp enough in after effects to make convalescence difficult and dreary.

In the fever he had rambled about George Darrell, a name that nurses and mother scarcely took in: it might have been a school-fellow, or a character in a book. And when the convalescence began, with those after-troubles that were worse than the illness, and an alarming weakness and restlessness that nothing could charm away, he began again with: "Where is George Darrell? I want George Darrell."

"By all means send for George Darrell, whoever he is," the great specialist advised; "I don't like this restlessness, and the loneliness is telling upon him."

So the doctor's carriage stopped one day at Grinhams' cottage, the specialist's message was given, and Hesba reluctantly owned that George had already passed through scarlatina, of which little account had been made. He had been sent back from school one day with a sore throat and a scarlet face, and was with difficulty put to bed and with still greater difficulty kept there for a few days, on low diet and herb tea, and it had been reckoned a part of the general oppression and tyranny of the Church, that he had not been allowed to go to school again till what they called the peeling was over and the clothes he had worn disinfected. All that fuss for a little sore throat and a red face weeks agone, and the boy as pert as a starling all the time. And now for this lord's son great doctoring Sirs had down from London a-purpose, and his own folk, all but his mother, kept away from him, and respectable poor folk's children that had had losses, fetched

away from school to pleasure his sick whimsies. Hesba had no patience with it. Neither had Dan, who happened not only to have a tailoring job that day but to be actually sitting cross-legged at work on it.

Then Dr. Forwood, who had comforted Dan's rheumatism and Hesba's bronchitis and carried them both through many a trouble for many a year, expressed some surprise that people of pronounced Christian principle, least of all a minister of the Gospel, should hesitate to save a dying child, because, through no fault of his own, he happened to be Lord Amberwood's son; and George, washed and combed and Sunday-clothed, was promptly dispatched to Deerham Place. Nor did he go empty-handed; Hesba's pride, mixed with real kindness, forbade that.

Hugh was in that miserable stage of weakness when the burden of the flesh is intolerable, and the effort of breathing too great, when the softest couch gives no rest and the freshest breeze no refreshment, when every posture seems more unbearable than the other, when everything done or said or merely thought is an aggravation of physical misery, and desperate longing for no one knows what eats the heart out. When one happens to be a child, without experience, knowledge, or philosophy, these sensations are too hard; and on that hot afternoon mother and nurses were at their wits' end to soothe him, while Hugh wondered at their hard-heartedness and stupid indifference.

He had been lifted from bed to couch to look out on garden and park and back again to avoid light and the sight of things moving. He had turned his face wearily, with sick despair, to the wall, when the carbolic-soaked curtain over the door was held back and in stamped the heavy-booted village boy, half-shy, half-defiant, wholesome and ruddy, bringing in the fresh scent of woods and downs and free air and space.

"Hullo," gasped Hugh in a weak voice, turning back with a flushing face.

"Hullo!" shouted George, in full, clear treble, striding up to the bed under the impression that he was obeying injunctions to be quiet and gentle; "whatever be ee lying there for?

"Grandmother have sent ee two eggs," he said, flinging himself on the rail at the foot of the bed with a force that rocked the pale sufferer, who murmured at the nurses' lightest movement but was unmoved by this robust onset. George's heart ached to see the wasted face and thin, restless arms; he wanted to catch him up, featherweight that he looked, and run away over the downs to the sea with him, or lay him on the moss in some cool wood with a stream running near. The great doctor Sir had said there was fear of his slipping away—slipping away—George's breath caught at the thought. "Two new-laid eggs," he said with a little gasp. "Our old white hen she laid one of 'em this morning out in shed. I heard her cluck-clucking. Black Sue she laid t'other in nest dinner-time."

Hugh smiled faintly, he seemed to hear the white hen clucking and see her strutting from the shed in the little paddock where the donkey grazed; it was pleasant to think of Black Sue's more orderly performance in the nest and George going out while the dinner waited, between school-hours, and bringing in the eggs. It must be delightful to live in a cottage like Grinham's and dip one's head in the bucket that stood always full by the draw-well.

"Bile 'em soft," George continued, "and there ain't nothen like a fresh-laid egg for a weak inside, Grandmother says; it do put a good heart into anybody. And Grandmother's duty to ee and do ee get well and hearty soon as ever ee can."

Hugh's face brightened at every word, he seemed with

every look to draw breath and strength from the village boy's wholesome sunburned face and clear bold eyes; the very accent in which he spoke had something of fresh country air and quiet in it; the two eggs, pearly white in a nest of green dock leaves, were lovely and appetizing. He had them put on a table within his sight.

"I know where there's a squirrel's nest," George said confidently, and Hugh felt as if he were out in the woods finding the nest himself, as he listened and asked questions till the nurse put an end to the interview and brought in one of the eggs ready boiled for him.

Next day George brought a rough plaited basket of green rushes that he had made himself, filled with wild strawberries gathered fresh at the edge of a wood Hugh knew. Another day, it was a string of blown thrush's eggs; another, a basket, with his greatest treasure, plaintively remonstrant, within—his kitten, that he coaxed into pretty play and diverting tricks. And every day Hugh was better and his mother more grateful, and the cottage boy enjoyed himself exceedingly in the housekeeper's room, where he was plied with all manner of good things and much astonished at the luxurious plenty and, to him, splendor of the great house and the quantity of useless things and people with which it seemed to overflow.

Very quickly then Hugh began to move about and play, and got George to bowl to him and taught him to bat. It was a sad day for both when Hugh went with the other children and his father and mother to the sea.

Letters came to George and were answered at longer and longer intervals, and that Christmas Hugh spent only a few days at Deerham. The boys looked at each other furtively and longingly in church, and George, singing carols with the village boys outside Deerham Place on Christmas Eve, saw Hugh through the hall-window, playing with the other chil-

dren in the light of a bright fire and richly-laden Christmas tree. He shared the pence and the cakes sent out to the singers but had no speech with Hugh.

On Boxing Day Hugh came to the cottage on his pony, bringing handsome presents and only staying a few minutes because another boy was waiting outside for him. George thought he seemed very glad to get away with the other boy, who gave him a supercilious stare and looked as if he thought Hugh belonged exclusively to him and could have nothing in common with anything so low as himself. And he thought, when he saw them ride away laughing together in the gray winter twilight, wholly occupied with each other and Hugh never turning once to look at him, of the happy summer afternoons at Deerham Place and especially of the day when he had taken Hugh from his couch under the lime-tree and carried him on his back round the lawns and into the rose garden, and Hugh had said it was so jolly to see all the things again. Then such a hot dimness came over his eyes and such a strangled feeling to his throat, that he had to let the bucket down into the well and wind it up again full before he could go back into the cottage. Then he took the sea-bird's eggs he had climbed the cliff to get and the popgun he had made for Hugh and dashed them out of the window of his room under the roof.

But Easter holidays brought chance meetings and the perception that Hugh would have been glad of more, but for some pressure from the powers that were at Deerham, and then George knew that the friendship was firmly established and was beyond any he ever made with his school comrades, of whom he always had a chosen band that he ruled with a firm and equal sway, and for none of whom, or even for Hugh, he felt the strange throbbing magic first kindled in him by the young Oxford man who read the story of the stolen blessing so beautifully. That kind of worship came

to him at times, quite suddenly and gradually fading, always shy, secret, and sacred, never spoken of; a wonder, an ecstasy, and half a terror to himself.

A young lady visitor, making a long stay at the vicarage, training the choir and taking an interest in the handsome young rascal with the clear and true soprano voice, created this magical atmosphere in him. Her voice thrilled him, the touch of her dress as she passed him made him tremble. She could do anything with him; she became the type of female beauty, all his life long; the clear carmine and snowy white of her complexion and the soft darkness of her eyes were as the hall-mark of beauty for him. When she sang, everything within him dissolved in enchanted rapture, he was carried away into a world of magic and beauty. She went away and the dream grew dim and faded.

Visitors at the cottage were few and uninteresting. People connected with the Baptist community came out from the parent chapel in the market town now and then, and sometimes those who frequented the Deerswell chapel; George thought them dreary folk. Besides these Sam Welland was the most frequent visitor; when he came a kind of duet was chanted by him and Dan upon the world's ill-usage of them, and their special grievances and revolt against all constituted rule and authority taken up antiphonally by each, with occasional two-part harmony and fortissimo unison, Dan's much spiced with Scripture and scriptural phrase, Sam's with socialist theory and revolutionary dogma. George was sorry for both, though they bored him equally; but he was fond of returning Sam's visits in his own person. The Wellands kept a shop of that mixed description common in villages, with a little of everything and much of nothing. They shared with the Grinhams the distinction of having had losses; or rather Sam did, since it was the private opinion of

the spindle side of the family that they had risen and not fallen in the world by opening the shop.

The tragedy of Sam's life was that he had been refused a renewal of the lease on which he held his farm—owing, he maintained, to personal rancor and favoritism on the part of Lord Amberwood, who wanted the farm for a creature of his own. No one could deny that, while the land was in Sam Welland's hands the crops were small, the stock poor—in consequence, Welland said, partly of the persecution of fate and partly of bad seasons, joined to total denial of timely help from the landlord—the fences were ragged and gapped, gates broken, buildings in disrepair, haystacks unprotected and spontaneously fired, corn-ricks thatched too late and mildewed, cattle straying and flocks diminishing from various mischances. It always rained pitilessly on Welland's new-mown hay and fresh-yeaned lambs, when other people's were safe and dry. Nor could it be denied that in present hands —owing, according to Sam, to a perverse combination of good seasons, a prolonged run of luck and all kinds of favoritism from his lordship: help in draining, rebuilding, tree-planting, road-making, and Heaven knew what—it was one of the most flourishing farms on the estate. Besides, Vintner, the new man, had money to lay out, a circumstance that gratified Lord Amberwood's grasping and contemptible avarice. Easy enough for Vintner to be ready with his rent. The world gave to those who had and robbed those who had not.

George listened to the tale of these wrongs with generous indignation, neither questioning their accuracy nor seeking other causes for Welland's mischances. He looked upon Lord Amberwood as a kind of rustic Nero without a redeeming quality, and, though he sometimes thought it strange that nobody else had a bad word for him, readily accepted his grandfather's explanation that the village folk were craven

slaves fawning on the hand that oppressed them. Dan Grinham was especially severe upon the degrading practice of curtsying and touching hats to the Deerham Place family and the rectory people, and laid strict injunctions upon George to do nothing of the kind, thus embroiling him so sadly with the powers that were, that he found it prudent to disobey at least with regard to the rectory.

A few days after the adventure on the cliff, George, glowing with his new confidence that difficult and dangerous moments would always brace his nerves and quicken his wits, went whistling along the village, hands in pockets and head held high, as carelessly and joyously impudent as a young cockerel, when Lord Amberwood rode by, saluting and saluted by everybody in gardens and at the cottage doors, as he passed. When he came to George his hand rose, a kind smile was on his face and he was on the point of stopping to speak to him. But the boy looked him straight in the face, whistling steadily and keeping his hands in his pockets, and passed coolly on his way to Welland's shop, where Susie, the eldest daughter, who kept the accounts and did nearly all the serving, was standing at the door, having come out on purpose to drop her curtsy and receive a smile and nod of recognition.

This was just what he wanted, as he swaggered up thinking to shine in her eyes by his impudence. Susie was a wholesome, rosy-cheeked country lass of eighteen, strong of arm and gentle of voice. She had always a kind word for George, who never missed an opportunity of getting one, and spent almost every copper that came his way in sweets and odds and ends, for pure pleasure of being near her; and for the same purpose invented errands to her father. The first violets, mushrooms, and wild fruit were all brought to Susie, and for her sake he looked to the minor morals of her small brothers at school.

But she had no smile for her young knight this afternoon; she was too petrified with amazement to speak for a moment.

"For shame," she cried when she got her breath; "however came ee to act so rude?"

He crimsoned and blustered. He was not a slave. He made no account of lords. He was as good as anybody and better too. All men were born equal.

"That's true enough," she granted, "for all men is born fools without sense enough to know what they'm a-cryen for. But some grows up to manners, George Darrell, and some to impidence. A sharp bwoy like you did ought to know better than to let hisself down to act rude to them that's higher than him."

Cut to the heart and suddenly conscious of the mean figure he was making, he turned away, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes, and dragged himself, dejected and downhearted, slowly along the road. But Susie's kind heart melted at the sight of her favorite's hurt look, and in another moment he felt a gentle hand on his shoulder and a gentle voice in his ear, telling him not to take a sharp word unfriendly but "come along in and have a cup of tea 'long with mother and me." Then his heart leaped with great joy and he knew that he was in love with Susie Welland. Further that he had been in love for a long time, and of course would continue to be so for ever and ever. Yet Susie was not particularly beautiful; no, he loved her for her beautiful soul; she reminded him of early morning dew, of the fresh scents of opening flowers and breezes blown from the crests of summer waves, and without knowing, he felt that she was truehearted and very sensible. To think of Susie or look into her clear eyes and fresh rose face made one feel clean inside; she was so absolutely simple and sincere that it was impossible to be otherwise with her, her honest and quiet glance laid bare every crooked purpose and evasive feeling. Ugly

thoughts and feelings sometimes troubled him now in the unrest and bewilderment of increasing strength, but one memory of Susie sent them flying and brought purity and peace. These things he felt rather than thought; he had no words for them.

It was paradise to sit in the room behind the shop that looked on the garden backed by field and trees, and drink nice hot tea, bountifully sugared and poured out by Susie's strong and capable hands, and eat chunks of solid seed-cake and slabs of home-made bread and butter liberally spread by Bessie, Sam Welland's hard-working wife, and feel oneself in the glory of being desperately in love, like people in songs and stories.

Sam sat in his wooden armchair with his hat on, doing nothing, as usual, and as usual talking of things he was going to do, whenever he was not keeping his song of his own wrongs and the world's injustice and special spite to him.

After tea, that George wished unending and that was interrupted by more than one tinkle of the shop-bell, answered alternately by Susie and her mother, Bessie took a bowl of scraps and put it into Sam's nerveless hands.

"Time to serve the pegs, father," she said briskly, giving him a moderately strong push that elicited a groan and a slow upheaval of loose and listless limbs from the too seductive chair; "and when you done that, you med so well pluck that couple of chicken for me and Jim'll run along with 'em and get back home before dark."

George sighed; it was a sigh that the sweet hour, warm with the comfortable motherly presence of Bessie, the cheerful bickering of younger Wellands, bright with the poetry of Susie's gentle smiles, the glamour of golden afternoon sun in lucent leaves garlanding the window and soft yet vivid red of hollyhocks and reddening apples in the garden, was over, broken like a many-colored bubble into dusty nothing.

So, sighing in soul, but comforted in body, he got up with a half-hearted offer to help Bessie wash up and took reluctant leave. But Susie's reproof still burned dully in his heart and the old Adam rose irrepressible in his last whispered word to her, as she stood cutting and weighing pounds of strong-smelling cheese at the counter.

"His lordship and the rector and all they med be higher than me now, but I'm going to be higher than any of 'em by and by," he said, pausing, cap in hand.

"Be ee then, George?" she asked gently, "be ee gwine to be crowned king?"

"No fear. I be gwine to be Prime Minister," he replied, mimicking her. "Or maybe when we've done away with kings and lords, and every man's free and equal, President of the British Republic."

"Oh my! Fetch me the smelling-salts!" she cried with affected languor; "but by the time you'm man enough to be Prime Minister, George, you'll know there's nobody too high nit too low to be treated respectful."

He turned very red and tears pricked at his eyes. But this second reproof sank deep and was never forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

THAT same day in the morning Lord Amberwood was slowly pacing the rose-garden terrace at Deerham, pipe in mouth and his eldest boy's hand tucked into his arm. The terrace looked across gently undulating fields and woods to a band of sea, blue with the soft-blowing azure of summer calm; seaward it was sheltered by a row of evenly clipped lime-trees shadowing a graveled path, landward by a plain, gabled Jacobean mansion of weathered gray stone, protected in its turn from cold winds by steep turfed slopes, buttressed here and there by stone walls and out-jutting rocks.

He was being eagerly questioned about the little, new, great world of Eton and solving doubts as to whether manners and customs of his day might have undergone much change by this time. Presently he stopped, took the pipe from his mouth and looked absently across sunny woodland and sheep-dotted mead to the sea's blue band, broken by white cliffs and dotted with whiter sails.

"I think you should understand; it is better that you should know," he hesitated, "that we are poor—I don't want to sadden you, and I can't bear to have to throw this shadow on you, by taking you into confidence—so poor that school and university expenses will be a hard pull, so poor that one hardly knows how the others are to be started in life. But poor people need not be stingy; you can be both liberal and economical—it's not easy, but it's worth doing. When we stint we should stint in personal things. What we do we should do liberally or not at all." He paused in the

inbred English dread of seeming to sermonize, even to a son.

"What rot money seems to be," Hugh sighed, landing a pebble in the rear of a rook meditatively pecking at dropped seed in the grass below.

"Well, it's very good manure," Lord Amberwood confessed. He was thinking of the cost of taking in for corn a piece of downland within sight. It seemed to have been sown with guineas, plowed and manured with them, and only to have brought forth a thin, poor crop of wheat-ears.

"But is not the Castle let to a millionaire Jew?"

"The Castle is sold, Hugh, and some of the land as well and the money already gone. Your grandfather sunk about half a million in afforestation and trying to bring poor land into cultivation, and that makes a heavy charge on the estates. Then I played the fool and made ducks and drakes of a great deal more of it. I was a selfish young ass and went the pace. Many boys do and none need. Nobody's enemy but his own. All very fine. Yet all that cheery thoughtlessness has to be paid for—sometimes by the unborn, nearly always by the innocent. If I hadn't thought there was a bottomless purse behind me it might have been different. That is why I tell you these things. Unselfishness is the best selfishness in the long run. I don't much *enjoy* seeing Isaac Sampson at the Castle, still less the prospect of having him on the land. The tenants won't particularly like to have the son of an old Jew pawnbroker over them, who knows and cares as much about them and the land as a costermonger's donkey. The beast values it for its thistles, Sir Isaac for the shooting and hunting and supposed social standing; neither for anything more——" Hugh looked backwards as they turned, divided in interest between the donkey, Sir Isaac, and a hawk poised with quivering wings over something unseen in the park below—"We must try to get back to the Castle, Hugh."

Hugh wondered how, still bent upon the hawk's swoop, and vaguely apprehending some information vouchsafed concerning schemes of economy, careful nursing of property, and preparation for careers bringing emolument.

"But people talk of land-owning as the same thing as being rich," he objected, relieved by the hawk's sudden swoop on his prey.

"So it was, in the good old times—bad old times, many call them, before great and growing industrial populations, machinery, quick transit, and Free Trade brought us corn and meat and all kinds of food from the ends of the earth. But now land is becoming more and more a costly luxury and not a source of wealth."

"Yes; Jim and a lot more are all for dividing it up among the cottagers, and the socialists for nationalizing it."

"Fine theories, Hugh; wait till they put them in practice."

"You'd think people who lose by their land would sell it."

"But how about honor and duty?" Hugh's eyes turned quickly from the crack he was watching in some steps under a terrace wall, where he thought he had seen a weasel vanish, to meet his father's grave and penetrating glance. "Remember the French territorial aristocracy before the revolution, Hugh. They had long farmed their land to extortioners and lived on rack-rents, a virtual desertion. That contributed largely to the great upheaval. But their crowning sin was their actual desertion, which precipitated the crisis. For no property carries with it so many duties and responsibilities, mutual courtesies and human relationships as land. It is half-human, this Mother Earth of ours; we are as much a production of the soil as corn and wine—and cabbages. We spring from it; we draw all our nourishment from it; we all inherit our common six feet of it, and are reabsorbed in it at last. You cannot make a clear, clean-cut commercial business of tilling the soil, as you can of merchandise, manufac-

tures, and handicrafts. Perhaps because Heaven has such a direct and immediate concern in it. Husbandmen share in the Creator's work, they hang directly upon the laws of nature and observe them from hour to hour. Winds, rains, and suns have part in the productive power of the soil; mechanical inventions cannot greatly change agricultural processes—a plow is still a plow and a scythe a scythe, whether machine- or man-driven. And though by applied science men can fly quicker than birds through heights unreached by birds' wings, and compel lightning to carry them and cook their food, heal their sickness, warm and light their houses, and flash their thoughts to the ends of the earth, nothing apparently can make seed germinate or sap rise, blossom fruit, or cattle live and increase, one moment quicker or under any other conditions than those that existed from the beginning of time. Nor can rain nor sun nor wind nor frost be produced, or the seasons be altered by any device of man. Perhaps because of these things, land is different from all other possessions, and agriculture, the most august and ancient and essential of industries, is the least commercial and the least amenable to change. Shepherds and field laborers wait upon times and seasons; there can be no eight hour day, no exact regulations for them. They must work or wait when and where they can. Cows must be milked and sheep folded, corn cut and hay carried when nature arranges, not when man pleases. Yet machinery and science can and do increase production, and there is no industry that has greater need of capital for success—that is, in an old and thickly populated country like this—where the utmost must be made of the different soils."

"Of course then the landowner is the capitalist, after all?"

"Yes, the large owner—when he loses here he gains there, and he has usually other sources of income. Stick to the

land, Hugh, and the duties we are born to. But the small owner cannot get the best out of the land. Even to pay his way he must be very strong and exceptionally hard-working. A few bad seasons, sickness in his family or stock, break him—poor chap, and I'm breaking your heart with this long jaw!" Hugh dropped the pebble he had picked up to shy at something with a murmur of apology.—"And the small owner cannot live at all on every kind of land. His compensation for these hard conditions is joy of ownership and independence."

"You mean he can't be turned out—like Sam Welland."

"Like Sam Welland, yes;" he smiled rather grimly. "But the good Sam was hardly turned out. His lease—one unfortunately long for the land and the tyrannous capitalist who owned it—had expired; he owed heavy arrears of rent, and was letting some of the best soil on the estate fall out of cultivation; so the lease was not renewed."

"He thinks it awfully hard lines, though. He says it broke him entirely. His family had had the place for generations and he was just beginning to turn the corner when he was chucked out and that finished him."

"This is news to me, Hugh—though having had some slight personal part in the matter I should know something about it. Did you hear this pitiful history from Sam Welland himself?"

"N—no," he stammered, confused by the satiric smile it was impossible to evade; "it was—the village——"

"Ah! village gossip? About me—to my son?" The smile faded from Lord Amberwood's eyes and his face darkened.

"Well, not exactly gossip. It was a friend, a great friend of the Wellands. I called Sam a poor stick, loafing about everlastingly and doing nothing for his keep—if you ask for a penn'orth of stickjaw at the shop he'll sit tight with his pipe and his halfpenny rag and call the women off their work to

serve you—and his friend stuck up for him; he said the poor chap's spirit had been broken and all the grit knocked out of him by his hard luck."

"Ah! And your friend, the mutual friend of the oppressed Sam and Hugh Mascott, the oppressor's son?"

"Why not, after all? We are all made of the same stuff."

"I hope not. I sincerely trust that nobody belonging to me is made of such inferior stuff as Sam Welland. My dear boy, can't you see what a poor creature that is? He never did a real day's work in his life. He's not bad, but no good for anything. He has the brain of a mollusc and the heart of a mouse. You can do nothing with such people. They have too little vitality, perhaps, to be capable of sustained effort. In the lower classes they swell the ranks of the unemployed, in the well-to-do they are the family failures, life-charges on the family exchequer, charming creatures sometimes, but more frequently thundering bores. You know Vintner, the present tenant of Sam's farm. A man of hardly average capacity, yet he finds no difficulty in getting a comfortable living from that land. He is bringing up a large family and bringing them up well. He has had bad seasons and ups and downs like other people. Welland's wife blesses the day they left Fairlands. Now she has a free hand and she has made that flourishing little business, built it up, little by little—unhindered and unhelped by Sam. She saw an opening and took advantage of it. Well, we mustn't be too hard on Sam, poor chap. But—the wife and children!"

Hugh swallowed a yawn and was quite sure now that the weasel was in some hole under the steps. A cat sat blinking in the sun just where the yellow and white streak had disappeared, a splendid sporting cat good at rats, he told his father.

"So Sam wasn't turned out after all? I'm glad of that. Thanks awfully for telling me."

"That's all right. But how about this friend?"

"Well!" he colored again and met his father's eyes with an effort. "It was—Darrell."

"Darrell. H'm. Now look here, Hugh. A man's life and character depend a good deal upon his choice of friends. And that boy is no friend for you. The first condition of friendship is equality——"

"And George Darrell is my superior, Daddy," he said, slipping his hand into his arm. "Haven't you said that one good of school is a fellow is valued for what he can do and not for what he is? George can do the most ripping things. A splendid chap."

"Well, from what I hear he is as clever and capable as he can be. According to the keepers he is a desperate poacher; there is no catching him. He is as cunning as a fox, he can run and double like a hare and climb like a squirrel. But those are hardly the things people are chiefly valued for. Surely this village tailor's grandson, a rough, uneducated National Schoolboy, is no companion for my eldest son."

"Now look here," urged Hugh, "didn't you tell me those lines I had to turn into iambics last term were some of the finest in the language? or was it Jim?"

"Which lines? Jim's capacity for admiration is illimitable."

"The churchyard ones—

> "Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
> Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
> Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

Now George is one of these chaps—

> "But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
> Rich with the spoils of Time did ne'er unroll;

Chill Penury repressed the noble rage,
And froze the genial current of their soul.

How can he help being old Grinham's grandson?"

"But Grinham's grandson he is and always will be, whether his noble rage is repressed and his genial current frozen or not. Ah, here comes your mother."

They had been too much absorbed in the discussion till they turned to see her slowly approaching, basket and scissors in hand and her younger children at her skirts, examining her favorite roses, clipping here and gathering there, shaking this overblown beauty's petals into a basket for the pot-pourri bowl, tenderly touching that half-opened bud, as one might caress the face of a child, enjoying the rich scent of a velvety crimson-hearted Camille de Rohan and the fresher fragrance of a tea-scented Viscountess Folkestone, herself as fresh and fair as the roses.

"I say, Evelyn, just listen to this precious son of yours——"

"Not mine, Gerald, yours. He's only mine when he's nice, when horrid he's yours. Well, what has the poor orphan been doing now?"

"Quoting poetry at me, in revenge for a long and tiring jaw, crushing me with my own arguments, generally playing the deuce to convince me that the only companion and friend for him is that poaching young scamp George Darrell."

The laughter went from her eyes, but a tender smile was on her lips. "Not quite all that," she said, brushing Hugh's cheek with a la France rose. "He only means to be loyal to a humble friend, who once helped him over a stile."

"He thinks George Darrell's hands might sway the rod of empire and that he might command the applause of listening senates."

"Yes, mother, and I stick to it. He's a splendid chap. There's nothing he might not do.

"To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read his history in a nation's eyes

his lot (very properly) forbids, nor circumscribes alone," she continued, "his growing virtues but his faults confine; though I don't think the boy capable of shutting the gates of mercy upon anybody—except perhaps a keeper. But really, Hugh darling, I can't fancy George Darrell swaying rods of empire and scattering plenty upon smiling lands!"

"Why not, mother? He wouldn't be the first poor man's son. Look at Wolsey and Thomas à Becket—and a lot more. If somebody would only give him a leg up—he's being wasted here just when he ought to begin. But for George where should I be today?"—a catch came in his voice but something held him from telling what happened at Deersleap Cliff. "He came and waked me up when I was given over; he carried me round this very rose garden—and he isn't a year older than me; he made me want to get up and get well like fun and I've done nothing for him, nothing. I shall stick to George as long as I live." His eyes were moist, and his breath broken, he turned to hide his face, and began playing with a little sister, who was staring, wide-eyed and admiring, at him.

They reminded him of proposals made to Dan Grinham to take George and bring up and educate him with their own boys; and which he had, very properly they thought, refused. Hugh thought Dan could hardly do otherwise, considering the conditions, among them "to renounce the faith of his fathers" by being brought up a churchman.

"One cannot belong to two classes and have all the advantages of each and the drawbacks of neither," Lord Amberwood said; "and considering that Dan Grinham belongs to no sect in particular and that the Nonconformist quarrel with the Church is chiefly a revolt not so much against dogma as against discipline and ritual, for a dissenter's child to be

brought up in the National Church hardly amounts to a renunciation of faith. Still," he said, "I think the old man was right."

"Thundering hard luck on a splendid chap like George," Hugh lamented, "to lose his chance because his grandfather is a pig-headed old ass. Couldn't you send him to a decent school without conditions?"

"No school would make George Darrell a fit companion for you. Friend, if you like, and as much as you like—who isn't our friend in Deerswell except Sam Welland, who hates me almost as much as he hates work?—companions never."

"Your father is right," his mother said; but he went away unconvinced.

"He saved my life," he muttered with sullen sadness, as he walked away with downcast face and hands in pockets, longing to tell how George had saved him, but restrained by schoolboy fear of betraying emotion.

"Why not make a keeper of Darrell?" Lady Amberwood asked when the boy's light figure had vanished in the green gloom of limes, "or apprentice him? This infatuation cannot be ignored. To go against it only makes it worse. Even Eton would not cure Hugh in that case."

"Nonsense, my dear. Hugh will be all right once he is at school. You've coddled him because of that illness! I wish —I wish, though, he hadn't been seen with Darrell the day he came home with that bloody face. Or if he'd only said: 'I was with young Darrell and he licked me.' Underhand ways are to be expected from that quarter. But Hugh——"

"Hugh is *not* underhand, Gerald!" she cried, spilling the rose-leaves with impatient movement.

"H'm!" Lord Amberwood's eyebrows went up. "This young sneak does Hugh no good," he said. "I wonder if anything would make the old man clear out of Deerswell—

a good offer for his tumbledown cottage that he never mends and never will? Every discontented waster, every petty grievance-monger buzzes round that cottage like a wasp round a honey-pot. The old rascal poaches on principle, he had the cheek to tell Willis. And very likely he thinks it's all right. Property is theft, according to him."

"Other people's property. Pinching his hens is theft, snaring our pheasants, justice."

"Dan would have you there, Evelyn. His hens are a necessity, our game a luxury."

"Not at all," she returned, undaunted. "People can live without hens as well as without pheasants. It's only a question of degree."

"But if his hens scratched up your seeds and ate your best bulbs?"

"He would have to make good the damage, that's all. Just as you do when the damage of game is taken off the rent, and broken fences and trampled crops are made good by the Hunt."

"I'm afraid the worthy Dan would hardly see it from your standpoint, dear:

> "There's blood on your new foreign shrubs, Squire,
> There's blood on your pointer's feet.

It was a nasty wound poor Kirby got from those poaching villains that time, though his wife wasn't made a widow. But what is the blood of any poor chap who is only doing his duty, any soldier, any policeman—killed or maimed with anything that comes handy to a senseless mob? Who cares what happens to mere quiet honest fellows? But if any senseless rebel happens to get a righteous knock when he's rioting—torrents of indignation, floods of sentiment, newspapers in hysterics—ugh!"

"Now just look at that Belle Lyonnaise, Gerald. Isn't she

a beauty? One mass of bloom. What is the good of bothering about these things? We can't mend them. The age we live and are let live in, mind, is tolerant of everything—except virtue and bores. That is why everything is going, in your charming phrase, to the deuce. So many ages have done the same."

"Yes, and so many civilizations fallen. Because things full ripe must decay or because men are narcotized by luxury and security?" he mused, following his beautiful wife with his eyes when she went singing to another bed of roses, the children after her and the sunshine playing upon them.

"While ye may," he thought, "gather ye rose-buds while ye may," and turned to look upon his diminished lands outspread in broad, clear light to the sea, wondering how much longer there would be any roses left in English life. His property was dwindling, his order passing, the political horizon darkening under threatening storm-clouds of revolution and anarchy; and who or what could stay it? If the old French landowners had done their duty by the land instead of fluttering about the *Roi Soleil* and pampering the madness of their vanity, would the cataclysm that swept old France from the face of the earth and drowned all that she had inherited through the ages of the chivalrous and beautiful, in blood and brutality, turned Europe for over a decade into a field of carnage and cruelty, tumbled dynasties in the dust and shaken every power in Christendom to its foundations, ever have occurred? If even at the eleventh hour of National Conventions and pedants drunk with theory and bemused with Rousseauish sentimentality, that territorial aristocracy had stood to its guns and faced the storm, would there have been a Reign of Terror? Or if there had been one kingly thrill in the breast of that son of St. Louis whose head fell with the crown it was too weak to bear? No. A

bourgeois king, whether a man or a democracy, can not reign, and blind content will never avert dangers it cannot see.

Surely the English landowner had done his duty, and surely never rural landscape smiled with cosy cottage, comfortable farmstead, and stately hall as this green and richly cultivated England had done; nor were finer soldiers and better colonists ever bred on any land. Yet the friendly serviceable squires were going, supplanted by a pompous plutocracy, ignorant of rural life and mutual lifelong inherited courtesies and kindnesses between laborer and owner, and the fine peasantry being swept away by the ruthless economic conditions of an overcrowded and industrial country. And could nothing be done? Must a commercial and industrial democracy continue to destroy agriculture, embroil society and sweep away classes that are the cream and marrow of the country's strength?

"Well, stick to the land, Hugh," he said in the afternoon, when the boy came out to ride with him over downs and past coppices and farms to see to this and inquire into that, and take counsel with one tenant and advise another, to chat with a shepherd on a lonely down, an old man breaking stones by the roadside, or pass the time of day to some old grannie sitting at her door in the sun. "If the ship goes down we'll go down with it, guns and all." Yet he knew that the land was slipping beyond any power to stay. And Hugh, more interested in the flick of the rabbits' tails as they scurried into their holes at the sound of hoofs, or the fluttering up of a covey of partridges, than in generalizations of this kind, yet received them in some obscure corner of his mind, where they germinated in years to come. But his interest was fully roused when, at the cross-roads, his father told him to take the short cut home, while he took the turning to Deerswell.

"I shall look in at the rectory for a cup of tea," he said,

"then I'm going on to see what can be done with friend Grinham."

"It won't be a soft job," Hugh said, cantering up the green lane that led over the down.

CHAPTER V

UNLIKE Queen Anne, who sometimes took one and sometimes the other, Lord Amberwood took tea as well as counsel at the rectory that sunny afternoon and enjoyed both in moderation, feeling that counsel was especially wanted on the possibility of persuading Dan Grinham to leave Deerswell and on the future of his grandson, whose behavior in the village had astonished his prospective benefactor not a little.

Having fortified himself by these good things, he rode on to Dan's cottage, a pleasant object by the roadside, sentineled by tall hollyhocks in many-colored attire, with late roses flowering on its mellow brick walls and jessamine and honeysuckles climbing above the eaves and straying together over the weather-stained, rotting thatch, that was scandalously in want of repair. He wondered what adjectives would have been bestowed upon him had any such disrepair been visible in any of his cottages; he also wondered what the walls and ceilings under such a sieve could be like and how much longer it would be before they rotted away, entirely unaware that he was at that moment being held responsible for the ruin in Sam Welland's cottage and sternly denounced for it.

Old apple trees, shagged with moss and lichen and bending with thickset fruit, glowed in the strong sun. Scarlet runners, vegetable marrows, sprawling over fences and hanging pale-green gourds over the pig-sty roof; reddening carrot sprays and purpling cabbages, with sheaves of rose-red phlox, crimson carnations and yellow sunflowers, flung pell-mell among them, made a cheerful confusion of color and life.

The cottage, with its diamond window panes and crumbling chimney-stack; the moldering timber of the roofed well-head, with its dripping bucket; mossed fences, dragged down by masses of ivy; the wicket gate with half the laths wanting; the tumbling haystack; the mild-faced donkey, patiently browsing burned and trampled grass in the paddock and winking, kicking, and brushing persistent flies away; plump and foolish hens, aimlessly clucking and bickering in the train of the lordly self-satisfied cock—all made a pleasing picture of rural peace and plenty to the unpractical beholder, who saw picturesqueness where the matter-of-fact villager discerned neglect and the discomfort of decay.

Poor old Hesba, her sun-bonnet tilted over her eyes and her face red and shiny with heat, was staggering through the back gate into the paddock with a pail of vegetable refuse, her appearance hailed and her progress impeded by joyous grunts and squeals from the pig-sty and the clucking onset of the whole squadron of hens, hustling each other and the majestic cock, and followed at discreet distance by the fluffy families of fluttering, chirping chickens, while the patient donkey came to the end of his tether, the wistful glance of his soft eyes dumbly asking if there was nothing for him.

Lord Amberwood drew rein by the paddock hedge, which ran along the roadside, and shouted a good-afternoon to her.

"Afternoon, 'rlardship," she replied, dropping a curtsy—a thing she would never have dared before Dan's face.

"A nice breed of fowls, Mrs. Grinham, a good sort to lay," he shouted.

"Aye, they lays middling well. Gets broody now and agen," she shouted, setting down her pail and wiping her face with her apron.

"I wonder you don't keep ducks with that little pool that never dries down in the corner."

"I do set a clutch of ducks' eggs most years, 'rlardship.

Too late now. Reckon I do all I can, but 'tis poor work feeding of they foxes of yourn."

"Come, now, come; you may as well sell your ducks for the foxes as send them to market. Willis always gives the price you ask, I hope; indeed, I am sure." He remembered a bill the steward had shown him of four shillings a head for half-grown birds.

"That's as may be. But 'tis one thing to slave and rare poultry to feed them that may be vessels of grace, and another to fill the stomachs of four-legged beasts that perish with never a soul to save."

"But they might be feeding vessels of wrath."

"No fear. Y'rlardship never buys my poultry. The Lord made ducks and chickens for man's vittles, not for fox's. And that's Bible truth."

"Really? Well, you probably know more about the Bible than I do. Grinham, I know, has whole chapters off by heart. Is he anywhere about? I was wanting a word with him."

Dan Grinham was sitting at the window next to the door, where he was accustomed to work and whence he could see everything that passed, very much at ease in shirt sleeves, with his thimble on and in his hand a portion of some garment that he flourished to emphasize the flood of denunciatory, scripture-dotted eloquence he was exchanging with a man in clerical dress, with strong homely features and iron-gray hair, who sat in a wooden arm-chair opposite him, and whose dusty shoes and damp, reddened face showed that he had walked some distance.

The bench, on which Dan sat cross-legged, and a chair and shelf near him were littered with his tools and scraps and rolls of cloth, else the small room was tidy and clean and not devoid of comfort. In the cool dusk of the interior a gate-legged oak table was set out for tea with dainty old china,

a relic of better days, thin, worn Georgian spoons, a cottage loaf, butter and honey, cheese and radishes, and a rabbit-pie, while the crackle and scent of burning wood and cheery hiss of a kettle in the outer kitchen gave promise of further refreshment. Certain stains and cracks in the walls, whence a dingy paper was peeling, and windows and door-frames with patches of touchwood going to powder, suggested an uncomfortable exposure to weather and provided the Rev. Mr. Burton with fresh illustrations for their discussion, which mingled political and social with religious topics.

"Look at the poor man's hut, as you done, Mr. Burton, coming along 's afternoon, and put it alongside of the rich man's palace," Grinham was saying: "Which of these gorged and pampered gentry, swelling with pride and luxury, would have the horses he tramples the poor man's crops with stalled in hovels like them down Cowleaze Lane, with the water over the thresholds when the stream rises in storm?"

"And where there was diphtheria in the spring? A shame, Brother Grinham. But the cottages are condemned, I am glad to hear. And you, my friend, though your cottage is pleasing to the eye, will soon be in like case with the victims in Cowleaze Lane—who, by the way, steadfastly refuse to leave their wretched cabins on any consideration. There will be a heavy reckoning for Lord Amberwood when he comes to die. Why do you not insist on his putting your house in repair—keep the rent back till he does? Resist the oppressor passively, as becomes an earnest and believing Christian?"

Grinham's eyes, dim behind the horn-rimmed spectacles, stared in bewilderment for a moment and then emitted a spark of anger.

"I sit under my own roof-tree, beneath my own vine and fig-tree, Brother Burton," he returned sharply. "And as for discomfort and repairs, I know how to lack as well as to abound. Poor and needy though I be, the Lord careth for

me. Besides," he added testily, "the house don't want no cobbling, and I allow I can mind my business and leave other folk to mind theirn."

The minister was hardly a man of tact, but he saw with some amazement that he had put his foot in it, and paused in the act of passing a handkerchief over his face with eyes and mouth wide open, before he could grasp the fact that the Squire contrived in some occult fashion to tyrannize and trample upon this independent landed proprietor and worthy tradesman, just as well as if he were a mere serf, bought and sold with the land he lived upon, as for so many years he had been led to believe was the case with Dan Grinham.

"Dear me," he said weakly at last, suddenly bereft of the plenitude of words nature and training had bestowed upon him; "indeed; dear me! dear me!"

"Whatever be ye a-dearing of yourself for?" retorted the down-trodden freeholder; "anybody'd think ee couldn't hear no sense. And you a chosen vessel, ay, and a precious vessel too, Brother Burton, with all yer faults and fullishness, being but a yearthen vessel."

"As so many of us are, earthen and frail, frail and earthen, worms of the dust. But to business, friend. The series of prayer-meetings we propose to conduct will need the stimulus of awakening discourse such as you are capable of giving. We want your stirring trumpet-blast of Gospel truth—every Wednesday evening at 7.45 precisely for three weeks. There will be a moon to begin with, facilitating the walk home from the town. For the second and third weeks—some conveyance might possibly be provided for your return. In any case the workman is worthy of his hire, and your creature comforts will not be entirely neglected. Alas! How frail are these earthly tabernacles! What worms we are!" he sighed, thinking it high time for the kettle to leave off its frivolous singing and minister to the carnal necessities of just men. "But we

live by faith. Though indeed," he added, perceiving the approach of Hesba through the garden with a twinkle in his eye, "the material substance of long-hoped-for tea is by no means to be despised, Brother Grinham. I confess to a dryness of mouth incompatible with fluent discourse." But the hope was further deferred till the neglected kettle boiled over, as if in furious impatience at the slight cast on its industry, when Hesba, instead of coming in to make the tea, merely put her head in and announced that Lord Amberwood was at the gate.

"Let him bide," said Dan testily, "and you come on in and make the tea, will ee?"

"He wants to see ee," she objected; "and sez he can't leave the horse."

Dan rolled grudgingly off his bench and sauntered out to the gate, with a sullen what-d'you-want expression deepening the furrows and hollows in his face, while he ungraciously grunted a reply to his visitor's good-day.

"I want a few words with you, Mr. Grinham, if you are at leisure," the visitor said, returning the salute of Mr. Burton, who had risen and was standing at the cottage door; "but I see you have a friend with you."

"I'm a busy man, y'r lordship. Satan don't often get a chance of finding mischief for me. The Rev. Mr. Burton, here, our respected chief pastor, has come over on chapel matters. It's proposed to hold a series of revival services hereabouts and in the town. All are welcome. Every Wednesday evening at a quarter to eight the Gospel trumpet will deliver no uncertain sound in the ears of outcasts and sinners. Glad to see y'r lordship among them."

"Thank you. I have, I think, already crossed swords with Mr. Burton at political meetings."

"You have done me that honor," the minister replied, coming down to the gate, "and I have not always had the

best of it. And Brother Grinham, having no use for me at the moment, will permit me to take a turn in his garden, while you converse together," he added, going round to the back where Hesba's bees were placidly buzzing in and out of the row of hives.

"Your garden looks well, Mr. Grinham," Lord Amberwood said, getting off his bay mare and flicking some flies from her coat. "But that thatch has been allowed to get a little out of hand. That's the worst of thatch, always wanting a stitch in time. Still, the best roof you can have."

"Good enough for them that has crucified the world to theirselves, y'r lordship. This here cottage of mine may be humble but it's honest; it owes no man anything."

"Still, there's no harm in having a sound roof over one's head with the winter storms before us. I'd have it looked to if I were in your place. Now, we have plenty of reed at the home farm you could have for the carrying, if you like. Thatchers are getting scarce in these days. But there's old Josh Bailey, as good as ever and glad of a job, if you'll let Willis send him to you."

Dan Grinham turned and looked at the rotten, leaky roof and thought of autumn rains and winter snows and frosts, and pondered the chances of a dry, mild winter and the likelihood of getting the thatcher paid by the steward, whether his lordship meant it or not. In the last case it would be well to accept graciously as a gift what of course was but a poor effort towards justice from the oppressor. In the first there was the becoming part of mortifying the flesh to play.

"I don't doubt but you mean well," he said, hesitating so as to give himself time to solve this problem: "though meaning well have made pavement for many a acre down in hell. But, after all, what's reed when there's nothing to pay the thatcher with?"

"What indeed?" Lord Amberwood echoed with gravity.

"But you need not trouble yourself on that score. Willis will see to that. You have a pleasant place, Mr. Grinham," he said, looking round, "but rather out of the way for your trade, and in winter lonely and exposed to weather for one getting in years. Wouldn't it be better for you to live in the town, where I understand you formerly had a flourishing business? Might you not sell this with advantage?"

There showed the cloven hoof; Dan's suspicions were amply justified. This overbearing Ahaz was trying to wheedle the poor and righteous Naboth out of his little vineyard.

"So I might," he returned, "if I was a Demas and loved this present world. And leave these few sheep here in the wilderness."

The unregenerate mind of the bloated aristocrat, unaccustomed to such flights in practical conversation, made Lord Amberwood turn to look through his eyeglasses at the paddock, where the donkey continued his fruitless attempt to browse the dry bents, uncompanioned by sheep, however few, and pigs grunted contentedly, fowls clucked and bickered together, and a robin warbled his soft and cheering song from a plum-tree.

"No, your lordship," he added proudly, "Dan Grinham is no hireling, and while there's some knees in Deerswell that have not bowed to Baal he's going to hold the fort for the Lord."

A suggestion that wider spheres and larger flocks might be discoverable in towns being rejected with contemptuous indignation, and Dan's deep-set gray eyes beginning to glitter with what he honestly supposed to be fires of zealous renunciation, the subject was dropped and the oppressor saw that the old man was not to be induced to clear out of the neighborhood on any pretense.

"Your zeal does you honor," he said, "especially as at your

age a man may look for some little leisure and comfort. Your grandson is coming on now, a fine, upstanding lad, very capable and intelligent, I hear. What are you going to do with him?"

"I've a-rared him up in Gospel ways and a handful he's been and a daily cross to his grandmother and me. And I've tried to learn him the tailoring. But he's stiff-necked and unbelieving beyond what anybody could think. You med so well try to learn that skittish mare of yourn to sit on her hind legs and stitch a coat together as that there bwoy; he's that headstrong and foreright, so I just leave him to the Lord."

"He's young yet, Mr. Grinham, he may live to do you credit and be a comfort to your age. An indoor trade would hardly attract an active, sturdy lad like that. Let him come up to Deerham and see what we can make of him. Let me see now—there's Kirby, he is looking out for a likely boy to train as under-keeper; just now we are short-handed. Your lad——"

"My lad a keeper? My flesh and blood dwell in the tents of the ungodly—to be learned to oppress the laborer in his toil and shed the blood of the innocent? Hark you to that, Brother Burton," he cried, turning with blazing eyes to the minister, who had finished inspecting the bees and was returning to the cottage. "His lordship here is for making a keeper of our George."

"Softly, softly, friend. The calling is well paid and much sought after and highly esteemed by those who see no harm in the game laws."

"To be sure, to be sure," Lord Amberwood broke in with sudden loss of patience. "We will not make him a keeper against his will. To cut the matter short, Mr. Grinham, my son takes a great interest in your boy. He has never forgotten the service he did him some years since in coming to

amuse him when he was isolated for scarlatina. My son tells me, and the schoolmaster and the rector say the same, that he is an exceptionally clever lad, both with head and hands, and it is a thousand pities he should not be put in the way either of getting a scholarship or of learning some good trade. Now, on the part of my son, I am ready to furnish the means of doing either the one or the other."

"This is an opportunity, Brother Grinham; a leading it were sinful to neglect," the minister interposed with interest. "With such a beginning George might eventually be trained for the ministry. Though he has not yet found salvation, he has had experience and publicly testified only last spring with tears."

"True, that's true," said Hesba, who had now come out and joined the trio and listened with wistful interest, anxiety deepening the lines in her face. "His lordship has spoke out handsome, and no beating about the bush;" her voice caught chokingly at the thought of her girl's boy a minister, and she remembered that, with all his waywardness, he was a child of many prayers. "There's no harm in our George, y'r lardship. He've learned them all out at school and no trouble to him, and if ee'll give him a hand up, I'll answer he'll be a credit to ee."

His lordship smiled, amused at being suddenly charged with the training of a dissenting minister, and touched by the deep and unselfish devotion unexpectedly revealed in the worn and weary old face usually so hard and grim; and, although he made it clear that he could hardly undertake to provide a special course of ministerial training, he promised to furnish so much secondary schooling as would put George in the way of winning scholarships or fit him for any further training desired.

"And the blessing of the Lord will be upon ee, sir," cried Hesba fervently, her apron at her eyes; "for the bwoy, with

all his unbelievingness and foreright ways, do have a power of words inside of him and a head-piece such as never was—there's no getting upsides with George when it comes to thinking, and he do take up learning like a pig at the trough; and please the Lord he's converted, there'll be such a laborer given to the vineyard as will cover the multitude of y'r lardship's sins."

With this desirable prospect before him and a smile in his eyes, and grave words on his lips, the oppressor of the poor sprang on the skittish little mare—whose growing impatience, long aggravated, suggested that, if she could not sit on her hind legs and stitch coats, she could at least stand and dance jigs upon them—and went off at a canter, leaving three astonished and gratified faces in the sunshine at the garden gate.

"If only he were a Christian," Mr. Burton sighed, turning with his hosts to the long-delayed tea.

"There's many a worse professing one," Hesba retorted; and Dan began to talk of hidden and evil plans underlying what was pure benevolence to the outward eye.

In the meantime, George, unconscious of what the fates were weaving for him, was lounging along the road in a delicious dream, caroling in his fluty treble that was beginning to crack on the high notes:

"O my love's like the red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June,"

and wondering why he had never known till now that he was in love with Susie Welland; there was such beauty and magic in being in love, it set everything aglow, it changed the whole world, like that sudden beautiful crimson that sometimes shoots up over the sky after the sun has gone down and steeps the cold gray sea and darkened land in tremulous light. One could do anything for Susie. She was like Rachel; but seven years was a long waiting:

"O my love's like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune."

Dream and song broke off with a hot flushing of face and a quick hand to cap, when the bay mare, head down and pulling at her bit, came round the corner and was pulled up sharply at sight of him, to his amazed bewilderment.

"Good-evening. Are you not George Darrell, Grinham's boy?" the rider asked, patting the dancing mare.

"Yes, my lord."

"Yet you passed me just now as if you didn't know me."

George's glance was turned a moment from the steady gaze that seemed to envelop and weigh and measure him so accurately.

"I was lost in my thoughts," he replied, calmly meeting the searching eyes full front again.

"Your thoughts must have been pretty deep, eh? Well, George, I have been talking about you to your grandfather. He says you won't learn tailoring"—"No fear," muttered the boy—"and he does not wish you to learn to be a keeper."

"No fear," George repeated.

"Well, now, what do you want to be? You seem to have a pretty strong will—steady, Barbara, steady there!"

The boy looked Lord Amberwood full in the face, and partly because the idea had suddenly occurred to him at the Wellands and, having been seriously regarded by Susie, had begun to germinate, and partly out of sheer impudence, replied quickly and with an innocent face:

"I mean to be Prime Minister, my lord."

Lord Amberwood turned, with one hand on the saddle behind him on the fidgeting mare, and looked down with silent, intent study of the bold, bright young face. George, quite aware of the irony in the piercing glance, met it unflinchingly, the impudence in the liquid hazel of his eyes

changing to a sudden, joyous consciousness of power and possibility.

"And I will be Prime Minister," he said to himself in his newly awakened self-confidence, stimulated by the laughter he saw dancing in Lord Amberwood's eyes beneath his grave scrutiny: "I will."

"Yes, you will, you shall," the swifts seemed to repeat in their breezy twittering, as they swept across the serene blue sky; the robin in the tangled honeysuckle hedge warbled a soft, encouraging response, and the purpling amber sea, rolling in on the rising tide with deepening music in its mingling voices, applauded as with muffled thunder of distant multitudes, and the moment, scented with ripened corn, clover, honeysuckle, and sharp sea-breeze, became one of the great, unforgettable moments of his life.

The mare, impatient of a silence that seemed purposeless, chafed continually at the bit, dancing always, and George, unblenching from the rider's gaze, laid one hand on her velvet muzzle and with the other patted her neck, when she quieted instantly, pushing her nose confidingly into his breast, unrebuked. Her rider read many things in the brown eyes, deep and clear as a forest brook, and the impulse to laugh left him. He saw courage, will, power, intelligence, and, he thought but was not quite sure, honesty.

"Do you know what a Prime Minister is?" he asked.

"Aye, my lord, the biggest man of 'em all. Him that tells the Queen her business."

"Really? That's a long step up. And what shall you do when you are Prime Minister?"

The thought came quick from the quick brain, that had never before considered the question.

"First of all make the land free to everybody," he said, softly stroking the mare's neck.

"Well! When you know enough to be Prime Minister

you will see that could never be done. And how do you mean to begin, you, who won't take the trouble to learn a trade, or lend a hand to help those who have reared you all these years with such labor and pain?"

It was like a lash across his crimsoning face. He stepped back quickly, leaving the mare to fret, and wondered why the notion of helping and being grateful to the old people, who had seemed to thwart him with such grudging and severity all his life, had not presented itself before.

"There's nothing to do here," he said; "in the towns there's evening schools and libraries and things. If grandfather'd let me get a place in the town I could learn of evenings, and earn money and help 'em both."

"Well, my boy, you'll never be Prime Minister, that's certain. But there's no harm in trying. If a lad only tries to be something and sticks to it, he gets along. Now my son, Hugh, seems to have taken a liking for you, since the time you came to play with him, and wants to give you a hand up——"

"Hugh, Master Hugh! There ain't nobody like he. There ain't nothing I wouldn't do for he," George burst out with sudden passion, and as suddenly became ashamed of giving voice to what was too sacred for speech.

Then Hugh's father saw and respected what bound the boys together.

"But if you are Hugh's true friend, with your clever, quick brain, you should see that there can be no intimate companionship between you and my son. True friendship there may be, and I think is. My boy wants to give you a helping hand. He thinks it hard for a lad of capacity and quickness to have so little opportunity of rising and distinguishing himself. I think differently. Talent and capacity are valuable in every rank of life, and a man is best where he is born. But if you really wish to rise and put your heart and duty in it, you

shall have your opportunity, but, mind you, every opportunity brings with it responsibility as well. You had better learn a trade. But you shall go to school, since you wish it. Mr. Hervey, who has been so kind in giving you advanced teaching, says you ought to do well at school. Good-night."

The great, clear brown eyes uplifted to his, filled and brimmed over and a thousand shades of thought and feeling rose and chased one another over the ruddy, handsome young face. But George for once had no word; his heart was too full. This was Hugh's father, whose grave yet amused eyes had been so kindly bent upon him; not his lordship, not the village king, the masterful, rich man. Dreams were coming true; all was possible. He stood, still as a statue, cap in hand, with dimmed, wide eyes staring into the distant infinite blue, that was merging into purple and amber splendor in the track of the dying sun, listening to the quick beat of the mare's canter till it echoed into silence, and hearing in that and the delicate arpeggio of the swifts' cries across the flushing sky, the robin's cheery warble and the multitudinous, murmurous laughter of exulting waves, the prophecy of the glorious fulfillment of a great destiny.

"You will, you can, you shall, George Darrell,
You can, you shall, you will,
You can because you will,
You will because you can—"

they all sang.

He knew now why he was born and what he was to do—like Moses, he was to deliver his people from that slavery so often deplored in his hearing.

The swifts had swept but once across the sky and the robin's fitful warble still quivered on the cooling air, when he turned, ran like a hare across fields, over hedges and ditches, leaped into the highroad, flashed through the garden

and broke breathless into the cottage, where the long-deferred tea was drawing to an agreeable close, and Mr. Burton was leisurely stirring his fourth cup and as leisurely laying down the law on things in general.

"Grandfather and grandmother," cried the boy, not even seeing the pastor, his eyes streaming and his chest heaving; "I've ben a miserable bad bwoy to ee, that rared me up from a baby, and main sorry I be. And I won't do it no more. They'm going to learn me in a paid school, long with gentry's sons. And when I'm"—even George's embryonic sense of humor stuck at the Prime Minister in the chill of critical eyes—"when I'm a man grown I'll take care of ee both."

"There, that'll do, that'll do," snapped Dan testily; "take and set down, will ee, and ask a blessing on your vittles."

But Hesba shed an iron tear or two before she could harden herself enough to give the child whose Maker, and hers, she feared to offend by loving too much, a sort of scolding blessing with the undesired tea she poured for him, and Mr. Burton bestowed one without the scolding and both bid him observe the evident leading in this providence that marked him out for the ministry, little dreaming of the kind of ministry that was in his mind.

CHAPTER VI

THE rectory people dined that evening with their fellow-tyrants at Deerham, according to frequent and pleasant custom, and when the servants were out of the room Lord Amberwood recurred to the subject of the afternoon council.

"A nice thing you have let me in for, Hervey," he grumbled, "you and Hugh between you—to train up that young villain, Darrell, to be a dissenting minister."

"George a Baptist parson?" cried Hugh, who had come in to dessert with the other children; "oh! I say, that *is* a good one. George! They've been having you, Daddy. Or you're trying to have us."

"Sober truth, Hugh. And it's all the rector's doing. Now you see, Hervey, what comes of poisoning the minds of rustic youth with pagan literature. Spending the parish's time in turning out sharp fellows to fill schismatic pulpits."

"One might do worse," said the rector, complacently peeling a peach. "Decent chaps, most of them. And the best often turn Anglican, and high Anglican at that."

"That's a nice salve to conscience. Too thin, Hervey, far too thin. Well, the boy's bent upon being a minister—and a prime one; he told me so himself. He looked me straight in the face—that boy has a cheek, by George!—and said, without a blush or a titter, that he wished to be—I'm afraid he's a bit of a bounder, Hugh, though there's stuff in him, and I must say I can't help rather liking the chap—he wished to be—Prime Minister."

A ripple of irrepressible laughter ran round the table, but

Hugh asked stoutly, with a quick, pained glance at the laughing faces:

"Well, and why not?"

"Ah! Why not indeed? Very likely it was pure, undiluted cheek, as when he sang straight into my face at the Christmas tea:

> "There's blood on your new foreign shrubs, Squire,
> There's blood on your pointer's feet.

And the first thing he means to do is to make an end of landlords and give the land to the people. He had the cheek to tell me that."

"Not without a sense of humor," the good pastor commented. "I've long suspected the rascal of laughing at the lot of us in his quiet way. Well, Amberwood, you may earn the thanks of posterity for giving them a fine comic actor, if you escape their curses for a socialist demagogue. I must say I rather admire cheek on that colossal scale and from the village scamp. How dull the parish will be without him!"

"But think of the liveliness of future parliaments, dear Mr. Hervey," Lady Amberwood said, "and of our astonishment when we all wake up one fine morning and find our land gone. I suppose he will leave us our houses—and just a little bit of garden."

"Not the tiniest cat run, my dear," her husband said. "You'll even have to share your jewels——"

"That I won't. I'll bury them first."

"In public earth? No good. It's worth noting how Tolstoi and the rest of them go first of all for the land. A bit of ground of one's own must have been the first step in real ownership of property, one supposes—the beginning of actual wealth, of which money was a later development."

"Well, of course everything comes from our Mother

Earth," Mr. Hervey assented. "But the first personal property must have been a man's weapons, primarily for hunting, then fighting. Much later came the house, originally a cave or hollow trunk, then the flocks and herds, don't you think? Pastoral folk seem to have been nomads, they had tents but no land."

"Yet they seem to have come rather late, late enough to help themselves pretty freely to other people's land, it seems. No, land must have begun property. Somebody must have staked out a parcel of ground pretty early in the day of civilization. No doubt it soon became tribal, rather than personal, and developed differently in different soils and climates. But as soon as the tribe expanded into a nation, or before, there must have been individual ownership again."

"Not absolute," Mr. Hervey objected; "held under and from the king, that is to say, the state."

"Well, that's socialist land-owning, after all, and when our young friend has brought that about in a cruder form, and anarchy and famine with it, the wave will have to turn again and individuals will hold land absolutely, or on some condition, according to the nature of the power that emerges from the ruins. Communal ownership, and open field cultivation with it, seems to have been fairly ancient—at least as ancient as Republican Rome—and, coming down in common lands to eighteenth century enclosures, has hardly died out yet. What is this? Coffee and cigars outside? Delightful! A splendid night. We've bored the ladies long enough. But first let us drink to the future Prime Minister."

Hugh held his glass and drained it at a gulp. His eyes filled, his cheek flushed, a flame ran through him; he longed to tell of the adventure on the cliff, but could not. Whenever he had anything deeply at heart he was tongue-tied.

"You may laugh, all of you," he blurted out at last, catching the laughter sparkling in his mother's bright eyes; "but

it won't be for always. Very likely they laughed at Wolsey and à Becket——"

"Come, come! Run and fetch a shawl for your mother, old chap, and another one for Mrs. Hervey."

They stepped out into the still dreamy splendor of white moonlight on the terrace, that faced the sea and was fragrant with bay and myrtle, and scented geranium that gave out sweets at the brushing of skirts.

"They laughed," Lord Amberwood said, "as we are laughing now, in Parisian salons but a few years before the Terror."

"And in the days of Noah," the rector added, pausing in the act of choosing a cigar, "if not in salons, then at their marryings and feastings, their vintagings and gossipings round fountains while the pitchers ran over."

"Would crying help?" Lady Amberwood asked, with her bright smile and caressing voice. "Now where in the world did the boy get these wild notions, I wonder?"

"Oh, the old man takes him to political meetings, where he sometimes holds forth," Mr. Hervey said. "And he mixes up politics with his preaching—I'm told they all do, more or less. Then there's the Radical van that comes round to the villages—they talk of sending out a Conservative van soon—such things and the talk of fellows like Sam Welland and whatever wild notions are in the air, a sharp boy is sure to catch, generally at the wrong end. And probably he never hears anything, especially not anything political, among the contented, industrious, well-to-do folk. Laborers are not much given to politics and as yet they have not even begun to realize the immense power that has been thrown unasked into their hands. Nor do I suppose they ever will."

"But they will certainly be played upon by professional politicians," Lord Amberwood sighed, "as pawns in the party game, easily handled by the unscrupulous—but for honest

men most difficult. Yet I have confidence in the sturdy immovability of the British laborer and the fine common sense of the farmers. But great changes are coming. If you and I are here twenty or thirty years hence, Hervey——"

"Well, Amberwood—if?" the cheery priest echoed.

"If—and that is a very strong potentiality—then Heaven only knows what wrecks and relics of the present order of things we shall find. We hardly realize how near we are to revolution, or how much depends upon our sticking to the land, and upon the laborers pulling with us."

"You would give them small holdings?"

"Undoubtedly. But they won't have them. They want towns and amusements. The lights of London draw them like moths. Eight-hour days, Saturday half-holidays, music-halls, Bank holidays, imitation pearls and places to show them in—they want these, not land. But more than all they want to escape every shadow of discipline and personal obligation. Two things democracy desires—material enjoyment and to acknowledge no man higher than self."

"Is aristocracy so different, Amberwood?"

"Ask yourself. Is it pleasure or pain to you to own men socially, morally, or intellectually higher than self?"

"Pleasure, of course. But neither I nor you are aristocracy, we are individuals. Such individual taste may exceptionally occur in democracy, no doubt. But it is in the nature of aristocracy to love to look up rather than down. And it's that flattening down, that negation of the superiority of others, that damns democracy."

"Maybe you're right. And this civilization may go as others have. The only hope for man is Christianity, and that can never die."

"True. But the Dark Ages that followed its dawn were long and very dreary."

"Well, whatever happens, I won't give up my diamonds,"

Lady Amberwood declared. "Do let us enjoy this delicious evening while it lasts, Gerald. Why isn't Jim here to make it into poetry? Only look."—A vessel, made apparently of some fairy stuff, was crossing the moon's path on the water; there was a soft sound of murmuring surf fringing dim headlands that ran out into a sea rich with shadows of breaking waves and lights from cliff and shore.—"The moon and the sea were always there and always will be. No man can abolish them. And the village and the church—how peaceful and sweet in the moonlight! And the dark masses of trees. And the magic of it all——"

"And the charm of gentle ladies too innocently gay to observe the signs of approaching tragedy," Mr. Hervey said with an indulgent smile, wrapping the shawl Hugh had brought warmly round her.

"Would crying help?" Lord Amberwood mused, while he did the same office for Mrs. Hervey.

He turned and looked again at the half-harvested fields sleeping in the still moonlight and girdled by the changeful, unchanging sea. "The future Prime Minister," he murmured, smiling at the boy's conceit. Where was the great statesman who could rouse and deliver his country from the lethargy of decadence and fullness of bread that was fallen upon her? Rather from hall than cottage that deliverer would come, he thought. The great names of a great period were passing, a sterile epoch had dawned; but who could tell? In youth he had cherished great ambitions long seen to have been vain. But for his sons—there hope could soar again. Hugh was not brilliant, not even clever—there was hope even in that: for the power to dazzle with the ambition it brings, and quick and shining intellect seemed to him not so much needed as plain, strong common sense and steadfast will, with singleness of purpose, power of application, and that solid, commanding, unresting intellect that develops slowly and

surely and often passes for dullness in early youth. A mind capable of storing and using an infinitude of information, knowledge of men, sane and sure judgment unbiased by prejudice and untainted by interest, a just and complete vision of life, a power of discerning character and capacity—these qualities seemed to be the most valuable in the present crisis.

The beauty and peace of the great, calm sea, not too calm to sparkle under the moon's broad splendor, and the lulling murmur of surf in the still distance, could not fail to enter the heart at that magic hour spiced with myrtle and rose; but tomorrow or next day, and most surely one day not far hence, raging tempest would be loosed from those silver, shining deeps, and great breakers would rear their toppling crests above some doomed vessel, and fling themselves with their shuddering prey shattered upon jagged reef and precipitous headland, and drive great hulks, battered and helmless, leagues before them in their fury. So calm, so peaceful, in glamor of commercial prosperity and world-wide expansion, in glory of scientific discovery and mechanical ingenuity, was England at that moment, and no one appeared to see the tiny cloud like a man's hand rising on the still horizon, to beckon a great people, perhaps a whole civilization, to its doom.

CHAPTER VII

THE quiet moon, strewing diamond-patterned silver on George's pillow that evening, found no marble-still, sleeping face with drooped eyelids and imperceptible breath, but a restless head with tumbled hair, and wide brown eyes, bright with eager longing and surmise, that kept him tossing on his hard and narrow bed and starting up to stare at the broadly smiling round that had always looked so kindly upon him, as if about to reveal some great secret, which it yet always withheld. The moon might keep her secret still; for he had found his aim and his destiny. He had been called, in words that came unsought to his lips at Susie's rebuke, and in the tumult stirred in his heart by Lord Amberwood's keen and searching glance, called to deliver oppressed and famishing multitudes from the burden of the world's scantily paid toil. These, he was always hearing from wise, poor men gathered round his grandfather or speaking at meetings in town and village—these, he read in pamphlets and papers, created all the wealth and luxury of the world in cold and danger, in labor and want, unhonored and unrewarded, for others to enjoy and waste. These others sat in high places, indolent, useless, in pomp of power and pride of circumstance, with high hand oppressing all beneath them, and with contemptuous tyranny mocking the world's poverty and pain. These made bread scarce and life bitter in his grandfather's cottage; they bowed his grandmother's back in labor beyond woman's strength; these flung men like Sam Welland aside, workless in the prime of life; these let the water through unmended thatch and made winter winds howl through bro-

ken windows and crumbling woodwork; these kept foxes to prowl round people's hen-roosts and hares to nibble their crops, and shot men for killing the pests; these sent men to danger and death in deep waters to catch fish for them, down deadly mines to delve coal and rich metals, and plunged them into the depths of the sea to gather pearls for them; these made them stand in serried ranks of war and man the guns and decks of battleships in tempest and cold, to be shot down and maimed for them. These paid proud priests to smile indulgently at their own vices and frighten and coerce poor men into virtues they themselves never dreamt of practicing. Had not he, George Darrell, himself been compelled to wear a surplice as a condition of occasional singing in the village choir, and denied regular admission and payment such as was accorded to other and less tuneful boys, because he was not to be prepared for confirmation and communion? All this tyranny was to be overthrown; all the suffering and oppressed were to be delivered; tramps and beggars were to be housed and fed and provided with the kind of work they wished. Everybody was to have enough. He was the deliverer, the Moses, still hidden in the bulrushes.

Full moon always stirred something in him, half pain and half rapture, that sometimes drew him from his bed and out into the lonely stillness, sole possessor of the beautiful, strangely dreaming earth and the broad, enchanted sea, drew him, stirred by he knew not what of wonder about to be revealed, in that magic silvery hush that seems to listen so intently, over the downs, among the nibbling sheep, watching the "merry brown hares" at their play, startling many a wild thing from its covert, alone under the solemn, star-pierced canopy of night, along cliff and gorge down to the glistening beach, where the surf murmured its deep, immortal song of content and gleamed whiter than snow in white moonlight against the black shadows of long, hollow rollers shattered on

the sand. A plunge in a sheltered cove, a joyous wrestle with buoyant waves, and back home through a lonely world of field and wood to drop like a stone on the pillow and sleep far into the morning, and no soul the wiser for what he had done in the night. That was joy. Had it been known and forbidden it would have been more joyous still—that was liberty, revolt.

But tonight more than the moon's call was the thought of Hugh, to whom he owed this magnificent opportunity, the turning-point of his life. He wanted to see or at least be near him. The moon's bright face smiled encouragement and drew him to Hugh. He heard his grandfather's harsh monotone in the next room, droning through long and rambling prayers, that sometimes seemed to be going on even in his sleep; his grandmother was probably asleep already; nobody would hear.

He slipped to his feet, dressed and dropped softly from the open casement and sped across country, over hills and through woods where he had often dodged keepers, avoiding the rare lights still burning in village and farm, to Deerham Place. The windows of the room in which they were dining were open to the warm, still night; the luster shimmered on bay-tree and myrtle and climbing rose. Lights from the entrance hall, lights all over the house, made the plain stone mansion a palace to the cottage boy, and brought back the feeling of exclusion and contrast of that Christmas night when he sang carols outside, unnoticed among the other singers, and saw Hugh playing with the children about the glittering Christmas tree in the warm, bright hall.

In the shadow of evergreens he slipped silently up to a corner by a window of the dining-room, and looked into the brightness. They were about to drink his health; Hugh was standing up and holding out his glass, flushed and bright-eyed, a slender, graceful figure in his Eton suit and spotless

linen. The ladies were dressed up like people in fashion pictures, the little girls in white frocks, colored sashes and ribboned hair, a younger boy in velvet and lace. There were beautiful flowers, choice fruit, sparkling wine, dazzle of silver and crystal, and the odor of rich foods still faintly lingering. Once he had watched the dinner going on at Deerham, in the playing days of Hugh's convalescence, and knew that it meant more dishes than the cottage could consume in a week, and took a good hour to serve and linger over, while honest working folk were tumbling, tired and half-asleep already, into bed, or watching sheep on windy uplands, or catching fish in darkness and danger on the sea. Drinking wine and laughing—like those tippling sinners in the Barley Mow, so often denounced by his grandfather—and the "proud priest," who now sat in the soft light, smiling and unashamed, with a full glass in his hand. Even the little girls and the velvet-suited boy, petted and caressed as George in all his life had never been, had some drops of wine with their water before they were kissed and sent to bed. He thought of his grandfather, moaning and praying himself to sleep in the dark cottage, and Susie, beautiful, loving, sweet Susie, at this late hour, probably scrubbing round the shop after getting the children to bed out of the way, and their mother setting some last stitches to the mending before going to that same Barley Mow—but of this George was not cognizant—to command the prodigal Sam home to bed.

And, as if the feast was not luxury enough, round the corner of the house came two of the superb and dignified persons who ministered to the revelers within, with little tables and chairs—more like beds than chairs—of pretty, woven cane, and stepping so softly that he had hardly time to slip out of sight in the shrubs. He saw them set cigars and cups of daintiest china and tiny, delicate glasses, with curiously shaped bottles and coffee; the ambrosial exquisite smell of it

made him thirsty. Then the revelers came out as if to begin all over again, and, like an eel in grass, he slid away, winding through the myrtles, and slipped over the stone balustrade into the shadow immediately below.

No wonder so many people had to be hungry for such as these to feast, he thought, his run across country, his mental travail, and the hours gone by since tea at the Wellands, having given him an unusually fine appetite with small chance of appeasing it till tomorrow. Hunger—if a fine appetite and the desire to gratify it can rightly be called hunger—was George's normal condition even after the most festive cottage meal, and, though he knew nothing of the aching emptiness and craving of prolonged fasting, he was heartily sorry for people who had not enough to eat, the true measure of poverty in his mind.

Quite unashamed and unaware of doing anything dishonorable, he listened intently to such scraps of talk as reached him—bewildering talk of Noah, of diamonds, of a terror, of a sharp boy, of politics, of impudence, mixed strangely with preaching and chaff.

When the guests were gone and Hugh and his mother were left with Lord Amberwood, and that benevolent despot was musing with a last cigar in face of the sea, that lay so quiet in the moon's splendor, a clean-shaven, pale man, who had come out almost unnoticed, drunk much coffee and said nothing, suddenly began to quote poetry. He was a writer of verse, which nobody ever thought of reading, though his friends sometimes bought his books and always congratulated him on writing them. He had forgotten to come down to dinner in his absorption in poetic composition, a habitual thing well known to his friends. He was a distant cousin of Lady Amberwood's and known always as Jim, people having apparently forgotten that he had been christened James and had a surname. He was looked upon as a harmless lunatic,

and seemed to be contented with his lot. Some held that, except for a craze for the out-of-date pastime of making words carry thought and emotion in rhyme and meter, Jim was sane and often talked sense—when he talked, which was seldom. He had been on the stage, but an incurable inability to recite verse like prose, with accents suppressed and rhythm carefully slurred, disqualified him for Shakespearian poetic drama, while a distaste for imbecility and vulgarity and a weariness of perpetual paradox and one-star character plays, excluded him from contemporary dramatic works. Deerham Place was so far from the madding crowd, and its inhabitants so hopelessly behind the times, that he enjoyed some consideration there as a man of talent, and was able to talk on all that interested him without fear. He knew that no one would read his works until he was dead, but this troubled him not at all, since he was quite sure that posterity would delight in them.

George had been on the point of slipping away through the shadows, when this pale shadow of a man, flitting silent and ghost-like immediately above George's hiding-place and leaning on the balustrade, began slowly and softly, as if thinking aloud—

"The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock—"

"Come, Jim, let's have the 'Mariner,' the whole of him," Lord Amberwood said.

And then they all stood or sat, motionless and attentive as the Wedding Guest, while the shadowy man in the shadow of a big tree, his voice, like the note of a violoncello, rising and falling in a solemn chant, let them have the whole of the great ballad of the mystery and magic of the sea, and the eternal strife of light and darkness in the soul of man.

All George's poetry had come from the Bible and scraps

of verse included in school and hymn books. The "Ancient Mariner," recited in the beautiful voice, recognized with a deep heart-throb as that of the layman whose Bible reading had so thrilled him as a little child, lifted him into another world. He knew now, without knowing that he knew, what poetry was and of what delicate music language is capable; the careless, exquisite perfection and unpremeditated art of the meter lulled and stimulated him like the capricious rhythm of breaking waves. A vague conception of what remorse might mean, and an almost Æschylean sense of the power of Fate ran like a black strand through the bright tissue of silk and gold woven by the poem; he listened with all his heart, missing no syllable.

He could not have retold the tale; but the albatross, the mariner, the phantom ship, the singing seraphs, the pilot and the pilot's boy, the harbor and the moonlit weathercock, were indelibly graven in memory; the rest was atmosphere, but such an atmosphere! And when the fine voice stopped and the listeners went in spellbound, leaving him alone in the vastness of the night, he went home in a dream, encompassed by the magical atmosphere, full of the images, the music, the enchantment, and slept far into the morning.

People never read, much less recited, poetry at Grinham's cottage, though they often misread Scripture and quoted unpleasant hymns there. And this intellectual enjoyment seemed to him a culmination of the injustice of wealth, like the exclusion of the poor from higher schools and universities.

A sadder and wiser boy came home to the cottage the Saturday night of the first school week. Days had seemed weeks before the opening Monday came; but those six school-days were like years.

The first glimpse of the often despised cottage, its thatch warm in afterglow, the hollyhocks wistfully expectant in the

uncertain light, the donkey's patient face pushed over the fence, as if on the lookout for a friend, and grandmother standing in the doorway, her hand shading stern eyes softened by anxious affection—how good they were! And while the smoky town lay farther and farther behind, what comfort in country stillness and country sounds—rooks sailing slowly home with solemn and meditative caw-cawing, sheep bells tinkling; what sweetness in clover and honeysuckle, fresh-plowed stubble and crushed thyme, in trodden turf as one passed lightly through the lonely peace of the gray, rolling downs, so deeply yet unconsciously dear; above all, what joy in the almond scent of clematis, a mass of creamy blossom over the door, and pungent smell of wood smoke, speaking of comfort from the hearth.

Even grandfather's grudging, scolding welcome: "So ee be back at last? Pretty nigh dark night. Whatever ee ben up to traipsin' along the road so long?" was comfortable.

He was at least at home and no unconsidered stranger, eating grudged bread and plainly shown he was in the way, as he had been in the house of the Baptist grocer, who boarded him while going to the school with "gentry's sons," where he had to take a very low place both for his learning and his lack of the right sort of learning. He was mercilessly chaffed and mocked for his clothes, his country accent and expressions, his hair and his gait, and was put among small boys far ahead of him, especially in school slang. And when he went home from school to the grocer's family, a daughter and two boys, his way of sitting at table, his ignorance of the uses of common things, like gas and electric light, his clumsy movements and heavy boots, exposed him to even deeper scorn and more contemptuous nicknames. In that house his position was aggravated by the boys belonging to the Grammar School, and being actively hostile to George's more aristocratic college, to which "sugar-sanders" were not ad-

mitted and whose scholars were called "Crammers" in opposition to the "Grammars" of the more plebeian establishment. Perhaps the severest ordeal of all was undergone in the solemn and, to George's surprise, enforced, school games, where misapprehension of cabalistic terms relating to cricket and expressions like *soccer* and *rugger* were recorded in purple and yellow upon his body, and incomprehensible orders explained by uncompromising cuffs and kicks—things he soon took to returning with interest. The anticipated pleasure of peacocking before Susie in town clothes was destroyed by the knowledge acquired at school that these must have come out of the Ark, and that he had mistaken his head for a field to grow hay in. But Susie, divining some of these humiliations and inviting confession of others, laughed, sympathized, and made light of them. She told him he had begun well, cropped his curls to the school pattern with her own hands, and so heartened him with advice and prophecy, that he went back over the dewy downs on the Monday morning, restored to self-confidence and more in love with her than ever, though still homesick enough to take a tender and furtive farewell of Joe, the donkey, in the paddock, clasping that patient creature's hairy neck and kissing him fondly—there was no one else to kiss—before he started.

But, besides being able to use his fists in a way that compelled respect, he was too quick and observant not to take a good place in the school, though he always felt and knew he was an outsider. In the perennial warfare waged between the Crammers and Grammars he was soon reckoned one of their best men; no Grammar, unless accompanied by a strong force, ever saw his cheerful and ruddy face in the distance without dashing round the nearest corner, while among the Crammers themselves he had more admirers than friends.

Still, in spite of his quickness and eagerness to learn, he won no scholarship. He was too willful and wayward to

study what he disliked or when. More than once he would have been expelled for insubordination and insolence of triple brass, but for the earnest intercession of the benevolent tyrants who placed him there and who prevailed upon him, not without difficulty, to do proper and public penance.

By great good luck for George there was a library in the town, belonging to an institute that had fallen from its original state and purpose; to this, by some perversion of long neglected regulations, he obtained free access and pastured at will in its richly stored shelves, thus acquiring such hazy general ideas and half knowledge of many things as blinded him to his fundamental ignorance, dissipated his faculties, and hindered his school work, but which gave him tastes and interests of enduring value, and helped to stimulate, and at the same time still, the starved emotions that found partial vent in devotion to Susie Welland.

The subsequent tragic ending to that idyll by Susie's marriage to the well-to-do son of a neighboring innkeeper, plunged him into a period of dejection and apathy, that wasted more time, and from which he emerged only to fall into still deeper and more desperate trouble.

The Crammers bought their tuck at a shop into which the Grammars rarely ventured, contenting themselves with laying in wait outside to catch and do battle with Crammers coming out. There the cream of the country visitors and tourists took luncheons and teas, and subaltern officers from the garrison misspent shining hours in chaffing the goddesses who handed them ices. And as these glorious and much-envied warriors were closely imitated by the Crammers, it was not long before George had acquired the swagger, copied from these subalterns, with which Crammers lounged into the shop and ordered tarts of lovely and disdainful ladies behind the counter.

Executing some such maneuver one day after morning

school and throwing himself with his usual insolence into a chair by a table, George was astonished to find no response to his imperative command for lemonade, and looking across the room to the counter, saw there no smiling damsel indulgent to boyish impudence, but a grave, sweet face, lit with large dark eyes, that appeared to be unaware of either his presence or his order, now sharply repeated and accompanied by the impatient tinkle of spoons on a glass.

"Would you be kind enough not to make that noise?" a gentle voice said at last. "There is no one called Flossie here."

There was, in fact, no one serving in the shop but this slender, dark-eyed creature, whose gentle dignity impressed and captivated George, and, joined to the graceful and pensive charm of her face and quiet civility of her manner, soon made Kitty Burns the rage among youths and a favorite with all customers. Having looked up from a tray of cakes she had been sorting, Kitty carried it to the window, taking no more notice of George, while a little knot of Crammers present choked and grew purple over their tarts and George turned white, and registering a vow to put the fear of Heaven into the giggling Crammers at an early date, walked steadily up to Kitty, whose face was from him.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I mistook you for someone else," when she turned and looked at him with a sweet smile, and George's business, already half done, was finished before she had time to turn away, with a little bow of acknowledgment, to serve customers surging in from a train just emptied at the station.

No one, not even the most daring and newly joined of beardless warriors, ever "cheeked" Kitty; the chaff she received was of the gentlest and most deferential character; yet they all wanted to be served by her. Some hearts were broken, and the shop became more attractive by her presence,

both to the general and the youthful public. George worshiped her, lived in the thought of her, drew pictures of her in the margins of school-books and composed verses to her when he should have been writing on far other themes. In a moment his devotion to Susie became part of a remote and uninteresting past, though he still had a kind and grateful corner in his heart for her. Compared to Kitty she was as a buttercup to a fresh-blown tearose; to liken her to a melody sweetly played was like admiring the song of a clucking hen. Instead of scheming to go home to be near Susie, he was always inventing excuses now to spend Sundays in the town. All his pocket money went to the tuck shop and flowers for her, till Kitty remonstrated. He told the grocer's wife and Mr. Burton that all Crammers were expected to go to church at least once on Sunday, because he knew that Kitty was a churchgoer and loved to watch her through the sermon and be near enough to hear her voice in the hymns. Her sweet and thoughtful face and unconscious and devout bearing impressed him with the kind of emotion aroused occasionally by a prayer-meeting or a very moving preacher, or, later on, by fine music and architecture and stately ritual.

Kitty, although it was long before he expressed his ardor in anything beyond respectful behavior, adoring, quickly averted glances, and following her everywhere at a distance, was touched by her young knight's devotion. She had brothers and knew the dangers and temptations of boys alone in strange towns, so she dropped her prayerbook coming out of church one afternoon and, when he picked it up, asked him why he was so much alone. And very soon, though conversation was severely limited to certain days and hours, she knew all his ambitions and hopes, and a little, divining much more, of his history. She lent him books, read his verses, sympathized with him in that ever-growing desire to lessen the burdens and increase the joys of the poor, and kept

him very strictly in his place. If he met or even saw her by chance, it was like a burst of sun on a dark day to him; if he expected to see her and missed her, nothing was any good. He never spoke out, the feeling, like that for Hugh, was too sacred. If Kitty had known how completely his love had mastered him, she might have taken measures to put an end to it; yet on the whole it was the best influence in his life and kept him safe and innocent through a dangerous and critical time.

But some verses sent by mistake to the Head of the school and subsequently joined together with echoes of Crammer gossip and exaggerated rumor in the grocer's family, betrayed him, and all was reported in a distorted form to his kind patrons, and these good friends agreed with the Head that it was better to move him. So George's heart was broken a second time and in due time mended again. But he never forgot Kitty.

"Pity we couldn't have got him kicked through a public school," Lord Amberwood regretted in after years; but his other kind tyrant, the parish parson, who knew him better, thought differently.

In the meantime the dangerous, delightful, all-important, irrevocable years of adolescence flew swiftly by and suddenly manhood was there.

BOOK II

MANHOOD'S DARK TOSSING WAVES

CHAPTER I

ALL day long at intervals Deerswell bells had been ringing; the Barley Mow and a few cottages had hung out what remained of the bunting that had done duty at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, the village school was adorned by an arch of woven evergreens over its gate; flags and evergreens hung from the windows; the evening sun of a late summer day slept sweetly over all, glorifying even the crude colors of the flags hanging in motionless flutes, so still they might have been carved in stone.

Dan Grinham, bent and feeble now, but with the old fierce flame in his sunken gray eyes, sat in a wooden arm-chair at his door, his knotty, purple-veined hands clenched on a crutched stick between his knees, his head tremulous with presage of palsy. The cottage showed no cracks at the windows now, the thatch Lord Amberwood had given it was still weather-tight, winter rains and summer suns had mellowed and mossed it to rich variety of color; rose, honeysuckle and clematis had again climbed upon it in sweet disorder. Joe, the donkey, had long since, to George's deep grief, slept with his fathers and been replaced at the chief mourner's expense by one James, a finer but less loved specimen of his race, now standing looking over the fence in the golden light, with the same patient, wondering gaze of the world's meek burden-bearer, slighted of man but marked forever with the blessed Cross.

Other hens than those whose eggs George collected quarreled and clucked together and ran foolishly in the wake of

a gorgeous, self-complacent lord at the call of Hesba, who moved more slowly and with less certain step about her small domain and was glad, in spite of much grumbling, to depute some of her toils to a certain Ben, who could never do anything to her satisfaction and lived under a constant rain of reproach and vituperation, which affected him no more than the twitter of sparrows in the eaves.

Sam Welland, whose daily comfort had been somewhat marred by the festal character of the day, the shop having been shut at noon and the family having "hyked off" pleasuring in a fashion he highly disapproved, had lounged in under a double weight of grievance and leaned against the thickly mossed bough of an apple tree. Mr. Burton, who occupied the seat of honor in another arm-chair by Dan, was again paying a pastoral visit, while Hesba, her sunbonnet over a clean white cap and a stick supporting her failing steps, hovered slowly about the garden, pulling a weed here, breaking an unnecessary twig there, with anxious examination of everything and deep regret that her aching back and stiffening limbs daily made her more incapable of the heavy work she had so long exacted from herself and thought no one else could do.

"If Hesba'd only a left things to the Lord," Dan lamented, "she'd a made older bones than what she will now, and been a finer figure of a woman than what she ever was."

"Aye, that's true enough," she returned, remembering her vigorous young beauty and drawing herself with her stick slowly and painfully up from a cauliflower she was bending over; "but where'd he a been, Mr. Burton?"—an embarrassing observation that the reverend gentleman evaded by a few words upon the necessity of some serving and the futility of too much. "One sometimes wonders," he added, "whether Martha would have been rebuked at all if she had not complained and asked for censure on her sister."

A stern, slow smile broke over Hesba's weary face at this. She had indeed been cumbered with much serving all her life; but the minister knew that she had not neglected to choose the better part, and it would not be taken away from her. He was not quite so sure of Dan's choice, in spite of his zeal and constant preoccupation with religious duties. Dan had been a thorn in the worthy minister's side for many a year, considering himself as a church of one member, of which he was pope, archbishop, bishop, and priest in one.

"Women," Sam Welland commented, his arms spread on the velvety apple bough, over which his bent head and lazily resting shoulders appeared as from over a pulpit-cushion, "is a mis'able worrying sort, take 'em altogether. There's my wife now——"

"Your wife, Mr. Welland," said the minister, "is one of those of whom it is written, 'her price is above rubies.' You will find her portrait accurately drawn in Proverbs xxxi, verse 10. Any man might be thankful to find such a partner."

"As for that, Mr. Burton," returned the proud husband, looking rather foolish, "I don't say but what Bessie was always a good un to work. But I do say she haven't no call to worry and spoil other folks' comfort like she do. The ooman never sits down without 'tis to her vittles, and many a time she'll snatch them standing, especially of a washing day. You can never get a word with her, no sense. And when 'tisn't work 'tis pleasure. What comfort can a man have by his fireside with she and the young uns gone off to this here birthday set-out? Dinnering at Deerham; encouraging the rich to fling away the money they get by grinding the faces of the poor."

"Restitution, Mr. Welland, restitution," the minister said, gently smiling.

"There, there, I have no patience with all this nonsense,"

Dan broke in; "eating and drinking—you may be bound there's strong ale poured out like water today, and a many tempted to break the pledge, reveling, and some say even dancing, like heathens. The sound of the harp and the viol in their feasts, bells ringing fit to split anybody's head, and flags all over the place like a school-feast, and whatever for? Because his lordship's oldest son is growed up. Come of age, is he? So's our George. There's no bells rung for George, that's like to do them credit by and by—George, that has done them credit already. Never a bell rung for our George."

"As for that, Mr. Grinham, there was never a bell rung for you and me, and most of mine come of age and nobody took no notice, nor rung no bells," Sam added with a great laugh, "nit when they was born."

"This lad is not without promise," Mr. Burton said, "but there seems to be some doubt as to his ultimate recovery, poor fellow. He was very severely wounded, and then he got enteric on the top of it."

" 'They that take the sword shall perish by the sword,' " Dan quoted with fierce relish; "and this here war was more unrighteous than most, if so be as there is any sin more sinful than sin. 'Twas a war of the rich against the poor and the strong against the weak, the world against the Lord's people."

"Come, Brother Grinham, come," the minister remonstrated. "I don't doubt but there were as many converted Christians on our side as on the Boers'. And, after all, we ought not to rob and oppress people merely because they are rich—as Kruger did. I must say I was always favorably impressed by young Mr. Mascott. And when you see a lord's young son with all the pleasures and luxuries of life before him turn his back on them all, take his life in his hands and go forth into strange countries shoulder to shoulder with the lowest in the land, to die or starve with them and

lie hard in the open in cold and heat and suffer wet and drouth with them, and do the bidding of those below their own servants, and suffer and die with and for them, and no compulsion and no profit in it, well—I say you can't help respecting such a one. Which of us three has done, or would have done, as much in our young days, that offered no such tempting pleasures and luxuries to us? I don't say we would not have done as much at the call of duty, friends; but there was no obligation, no special call in this, mind you——"

"No," cried Dan, "you're right there. It was a tempting of the Lord's providence—vanity and wanton shedding of blood. There was our George—crazy to go out 'long with Mr. Hugh in as unrighteous a cause as ever was and very near led astray by him; he thinks that much of him. 'Twas an ill day when we let the boy go and play 'long with him up at the Place that time—feasting his eyes upon vanities and carnal pleasures, the pride of life and the lust of the eye. I was against it from the first; but Hesba—it was she that gave in—a weak vessel is Hesba, a weaker never was."

"Aye, poor wold heart of her," said Hesba, who had just wandered within hearing again; "weak she have a been, but grace maybe she'll find. And what have come of Hesba's weakness? The boy, trained up in all the learning of gentry, is as smart a gentleman as any of 'em, and only waiting the Lord's call to the ministry."

"Oh, go 'long with your foolishness, Hesba. Led astray by worldliness and bad companions and vain learning, is our George. Twenty-one year old and hard of heart and unconverted, after all we done for en, still in his sins," Dan complained.

"Patience, brother," the minister said; "who knows what may be working in the lad's mind? He is diligent and earnest and feels more than he says—very earnest, though as

yet only in the direction of politics, but right politics, if a little touched with youthful exaggeration. Patience and prayer, Daniel Grinham, patience and prayer. As far as this world goes, he is well set out in life. He is doing well in the office, I hear, and will get his articles in time, if he is prudent and saving."

"What's a lawyer's articles to a minister's calling?" Dan asked pertinently.

"Not all converted Christians are called to the ministry," Mr. Burton returned. "And the call may come yet. Before his conversion Paul was learned in many things, that he might become all things to all men. Patience and prayer, brother."

"I've a-wrestled by the hour in prayer for George Darrell's soul, and I've beat en black and blue," Daniel muttered resentfully, "and he's as worldly and bad as any of 'em——"

"Aye, Daniel Grinham," cried Hesba, turning on him with sudden fury, "you'd let him go on and shut your eyes like Eli to his real sins day after day, and when the poor boy did but make ee look silly one time before folk, by what he let out in the innocence of his heart, you'd a killed him, if I hadn't a stood between ee, and more than once before. You med a forgotten, but I haven't, and maybe the poor child haven't and there's One above haven't. Black and blue, aye, and bleeding too he've a ben, and for nothing."

Dan, staggered by the sudden onset, struggled for speech, his eyes starting, foam on his trembling mouth. Hesba shrank from his uplifted stick. The pastor sprang up and stood between them.

"Peace, peace, Hesba," he said. "We are all subject to infirmities of temper and daily need to ask and receive forgiveness. You do ill to expose a good man's long-pardoned weakness."

"Long-pardoned," gasped Dan, "whiter than snow."

"I done ill," Hesba acknowledged, trembling, "but he shouldn't ha' gone on again' the boy behind his back—like he always do——"

"Hulloa! What's the row?" cried a cheerful and vigorous young voice, as two or three quick, springing strides brought the well-set-up figure of George up the path, and he burst like a fresh spring tempest upon them and diverted attention and the wrath of Dan to himself.

"Wasting of money pleasuring again," was his grandfather's amiable greeting. "Why ever can't ee let anybody know if ye must come hyking home instead of being diligent in business serving the Lord?" and the storm quieted but left destruction in its path.

George quickly perceived that something more than a morose habit underlay the old man's ungracious reception of him, and thought that both he and Hesba had aged considerably since he saw them last. But he kept these thoughts to himself, and all seemed to be going well.

Somebody else had been pleasantly surprised by a visit from George that day. Hugh Mascott, still ghastly pale under his sun brown, with a red scar on his neck and a stiff leg, had just gone through the torment of being bathed and valeted and helped into a sitting-room, where he sank wearily on a sofa, book in hand, and looked out over the sunny prospect to the sea, irritated by the bell-music rising on the breeze and dying gently away, irritated by the arrangement of the blinds, irritated at being left alone and out of reach of a bell, though he had but just sent everybody pettishly away and angrily scouted the offer of one, irritated even by the sudden trill of a lark shooting up into the pure, soft blue; wanting he knew not what, wishing he had left his bones with many a better fellow's on the veldt, in that nerve misery of lingering weakness that makes the mere fact of being alive an in-

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sufferable burden—when the recently-snubbed nurse came in, irrepressibly cheerful as ever, but with a dreadful little covered basin in her hand, at which he groaned aloud, swearing he would pitch it out of the window if it came within a yard of him.

"Poor dear! That's no good," she said. "Plenty more if you do. Come now, drink it off and you'll be your own man again." She listened, like a mother with a fractious baby, unperturbed and tenderly pitiful, to threats of cushions at her head, vows of being shut of everybody, doctors, nurses, and all, reproaches at being left alone, at being interrupted, at never having a moment to oneself, demands for bottled Bass, lemon squash, whiskey and soda, decent food, commands to saddle White Heather, intentions to ride across the downs, to fence, play tennis; while she thought of the things this pretty, gently-bred, clean-limbed boy had done and suffered gaily under that burning and freezing foreign sky, of weary marches surprised by fire from the ground beneath and hills above, from ridge and hollow and tree, from feigned friends and flags of truce; she thought of that perpetual, irritating, savage rattle of machine-guns mixed with cries of wounded horses and men; she thought of mean toils, cheerfully done, of perils and privations gallantly borne—things she had read and heard of, but never from him—with an ache of loving admiration in her heart. "Strict orders, no use to kick," she said briskly, feeding him. "Another present for you downstairs. Oh, my, what a lucky boy you are!"

"Oh! Confound the rotten presents! What beast wants to be thanked now?"

"No beast, dear. A nice, handsome young man wants to see you. Dreadfully upset because he can't. Wants to wait till you're asleep and look at you from behind the door——"

"Shut up! Have the blighter chucked out. Where's the beastly present? And what's the rotter's name?"

"Let me see—if I haven't forgotten it now!"

"Not Fellowes? H'm, Fellowes might just as well look a fellow up. Selfish owl!—Nor Caryll? I can't be bothered with anybody. Confound those bells! All that row for a chap that can't stand and never will. They'll make the same row for Cecil two years on, when I'm underground."

"Not Caryll, but something like it—Darrell, that's the name, George Darrell."

"George? George Darrell? Nurse, you *are* a dear. Run now, run for all you're worth, and bring him up. Right about face! Quick march! Doctor's orders? I'll doctor him and you too, if you don't go and bring George Darrell up as fast as you can. Dear nurse, best and wisest of nurses, I shouldn't be here for you to torment and domineer over but for him. Go on now and fetch him, and I'll do every blessed thing you tell me for a week of Sundays and get well in spite of it. Come now."

Nurse was impeccable, but her heart was soft, far too soft for her comfort, and she noted the kindling of the dulled eye and flush of vital joy in the apathetic face, and in another moment disappeared and in came George, as he had come years ago, a rough and clumsy village boy, now a well-grown man with carefully-trimmed mustache, bold, intelligent glance and confident bearing, a little abrupt but still winning, with a bright, transfiguring smile; and now, as then, Hugh seemed to see health and strength and the joy of life and vigor of wild nature come in with him and call into activity some hidden, secret source of strength.

"George, dear old boy!"

George's quick, firm step brought him to the sofa to clasp

the wasted fingers with strong pressure gentled by their frailty.

"Hulloa!" he cried, startled and shocked more by Hugh's bursting into tears than by his evident physical prostration. "Hold hard."

"It's the beastly weakness," gasped Hugh; "it's turned me into a sort of girl—makes me carry on like a silly little owl of a flapper. Pity the blessed Boers hadn't made a clean job of it when they were about it."

"Now we know what an infernal thing war is," blustered George, much moved. "But you'll be all right now."

"I shall never be all right, George. It wasn't the wounds. It was the beastly enteric on the top of them and the bad food and starvation. Did you ever see such a wreck? But you might. Lots of chaps came off worse than I did. There's poor Follett, Jim's brother, don't you know—but don't let it out—clean gone off his head. The clean jobs—the men who fell had the best of it. There were three in our family. But look here, how did you come?"

"I got a couple of days off," said George, who had calmly taken the day that had been denied him, at the risk of losing his post and imperilling his chance of getting his articles. "The boss isn't a bad sort, so I thought I might as well come here as anywhere and look up the old people; it was so jolly hard not to know how you really were. Some said one thing and some another and I wanted to be sure. So here's many happy returns, and—I thought you might like this," dragging a parcel from a pocket and disclosing an extremely shabby and battered book. "Picked it up on a stall—rare edition—pretty sure it's genuine."

"Oh, I say! You *are* a chap. But look here," he said, opening and eagerly examining it, "this must have cost a fortune."

"At Quaritch's it would, very likely. But on a dirty old

stall in a back street you get them for nothing—when they are there," said George unblushingly, amply repaid for the three weeks' half-rations and no tobacco, beer or small pleasures, the book had cost, by the light in Hugh's languid face.

"But how did you know——" Hugh began and George quickly interrupted.

"Easily. You told one of those chaps at Oxford that day you'd give anything for it."

"At Oxford, that day," Hugh mused. George, then in an office at Southampton, had taken a cheap excursion train to Oxford, arriving in time to catch Hugh—for whose college he had made at once—flying out of chapel and cannoning full tilt into him. He had not expected to see Hugh, but was curious to discover what sort of a place it was that guards the keys of knowledge so jealously from all but a favored few, for such was his ingenuous conception of the functions and purpose of that ancient seat of learning—and also to form some idea of the surroundings and daily life of the friend he worshiped.

Many surprises awaited George that day. His knowledge of architectural beauty was limited to Eton and Windsor, and the beauty of Oxford in May morning sunshine, fresh lime foliage and mellowed brick overflowing with wall-flowers, made him giddy with pure delight. Could people fall back into other centuries, had he dropped into a city built of dreams? How had all that city of medieval splendor managed to escape the scythe-sweep of all-ravaging time and get itself left behind? Beauty upon beauty, college after college, soaring tower and buttressed hall, intricate tracery of arched window and oriel glowing with rich-hued glass, mossed roof, warm brick and solemn gray stone, glory of old garden and secular trees—there was no end to it.

Hugh took him home to breakfast up flights of break-neck, worm-eaten stairs to lodgings such as George would have scorned for himself. The combination of homeliness and luxury in those narrow little rooms and the number of youths housed in every college amazed him. A holy thirst for knowledge alone could lead even ardent hearts to endure such discomfort, he thought.

After breakfast—interrupted by unceremonious incursions of amazingly childish youths—he was retained almost by force, his allusions to obligatory lectures greeted with shouts of laughter, the notion of reading on such a morning treated with scorn. Lions were shown him and their purpose indicated—every now and then with additions and explanations from youths of grave and serious demeanor, so extraordinary as to make him wonder if when these colleges were founded insanity was a necessary ingredient in learning, till something showed him that he was being "had."

"Bless your innocent heart," Hugh said in reply to his wondering what time was left for study; "you don't suppose those chaps come here to swot? Those you've seen are not a reading set."

This was another instance of the cruelty and injustice of wealth, that boys—wasters he called them—who only wanted to make merry and play, should waste and abuse the splendid opportunities denied to men like himself, only because they were rich men's sons.

"But you?" he said, "surely you don't idle the whole of the time away?"

"Me? Oh! I shall buck up by and by, read in the long, put on a sprint and pass out decently. But, my dear chap, I'm not a monk and you can only be young once, don't you know."

This and a rapidly-formed conviction—George's convic-

tions were always in lightning flashes—that only one sin, and that unpardonable, was acknowledged among these gilded youths, namely, to be or speak in earnest of anything but games and sports—which demanded absolute gravity tempered by special slang—made a subsequent conversation sprinkled with allusions to books and editions with a couple of men, apparently just like the others, using the same slang and clipped speech and bubbling over with jest, one of the greatest surprises of all.

"That day at Oxford?" Hugh repeated. "Fancy your remembering that and what those fellows said. That's the worst of clever chaps like you. You see too much; like the *chiel,* you're always taking mental notes, you 'tent' everything," and George felt that to be clever was unwise.

"Well, clever or stupid, I took notes then and no mistake," he said. "I'd never been there before and wanted to know what the life was like."

"And, after all, 'tisn't a bad old rat-hole," Hugh acknowledged, wondering if he would ever be well enough to go back and finish; "and if it hadn't been for this beastly war——"

"Ah! you may well call it beastly. Do you mind—I mean remember——"

"Stick to the *mind,* old chap; it warms up the cockles of one's heart to hear the good old country words; *mind's* a ripping word, pure Saxon—let 'em have it in the House by and by. I say, have you given up going to be Prime Minister yet?"

"Not quite," he said with a joyous laugh; "it's the field-marshal's baton in the private's knapsack—they didn't all get it, but very likely it helped them all along. No, I'm not going to be laughed out of my baton, no fear."

"Go in and win, old boy! Jim says you write stunning verse already."

"Oh, go along! He does, if you like, but a poor stick he'd be in the House. Well, do you mind how you wanted to go into the Army?"

"Rather."

"Now that you know how dreadful war is, you'll have had jolly well enough fighting."

"Not at all. But I shall never be fit for the service. I always knew that war was dreadful. And a taste of it hasn't put me off wanting to be in the thick of it when there's fighting to be had. If you had only been with us, as you so nearly were, you'd feel the same."

"Ah, you very nearly perverted me that time. War's a wicked thing."

"Wicked? Oh, yes, when it's unjust. But both sides can't be right, though they may both honestly believe they are. In this beastly business, whatever slim old Kruger and his crowd thought—and I'm not going to do battle with you on that—most of the Boers thought they were fighting for hearth and home, and we all *knew* we were fighting for the Empire and the oppressed English in Africa, and—" with a deep, long sigh, "we won at last."

"Well, Mr. Hugh, you're not fit for a scrap today; so, taking all that you say for granted, was all that butchering and maiming and ruin of those poor hard-working people's homes, the country laid waste out there and labor and trade here, worth it?"

"Yes, well worth it. Because, my dear old chap, the soul is greater than the body, and material suffering, poverty and sorrow of heart and death of multitudes, is dust in the balance compared to justice and right."

"If you call murder and robbery right," George began. "But, accepting that, was war—violence, that is—the best way of settling the difference in this case?"

"The best? What other way was there? When treaties

are torn up, obligations scouted, injustice and wrong allowed to run rampant, what other way can there be? How are you going to make nations behave themselves? Arbitration? What angel or demi-god, or collection of them, is to arbitrate, and who is to enforce the arbitration? How is a minimum of good behavior enforced in civilized states? Only by strength, violence, if you like. Shut prisons and police courts, disband police and soldiers, and what man's property, what woman's honor, whose life and limb, would be safe? Only his, who went armed and fortified and garrisoned his house, and was exceptionally strong in mind and body. We've gone through that stage——"

"Yes, and we have outgrown it; we are more enlightened now, more free, more Christian. Such things would not be tolerated in these days. Public opinion——"

"Public opinion, when in favor of good conduct, is certainly that if a man steals and is found out he is ruined. Perhaps the blessed British policeman is the basic force upon which the law rests in the first resort in this country, and the army is the last. That failing, there is chaos!"

"Without the unanimous voice of a free people and the consenting and originating force of a free people, how could laws have been organized and developed and your blessed British 'copper' ever have existed?"

"Laws have always been given by great men—not ignorant multitudes."

"And you call yourself a democrat?"

"Yes, George; in the sense of giving all classes their just due, not one only. Laws were given by great men. Moses—Justinian——"

"Free republican Rome——"

"Strong, aristocratic Rome. Rome was never republican in your democratic sense and hardly ever free in any. Because she was strongly governed she was able to conquer

and rule all the known world. Men like Charlemagne and our own Edward and Napoleon made laws and enforced them by strong rule—oligarchic or autocratic. Your government by the people, meaning the most numerous class of them—never was or can be. But here comes that blessed old nuisance, the doctor."

"Here he is," echoed a cheerful voice, and the homely, hearty, weather-beaten face of the man who knew the troubles, sins, and sufferings of half the countryside appeared in the doorway. "Here's the harmless, necessary nuisance. And what's all this about oligarchies and democracies? What, George Darrell? How d'you do? What d'ye mean by upsetting my patient, eh? *You*'ll never be the doctor's friend, my boy, with that muscle and clear eye. No, no; you needn't go. There's nothing the matter with Mr. Mascott now; he's only pretending; wants to be cosseted up, that's all. Many happy returns to you, sir. I'm blest if I hadn't forgotten the birthday. May you live to confound all the politics of George Darrell and his party—but let 'em alone now till that chalky face begins to blush again."

"Come now, doctor, George's politics are not all to be confounded; some are jolly good. How do you know them?"

"Confound his politics, say I. How do I know what they are? Read his verses in the *Advertiser*. Red republican, rank radical. Many a young fellow begins like that. I had a touch of it myself when I was a student, and your father says you have. Wanted to tear everything up, pull the whole place down and begin building over again on nothing. But work and going about and seeing what the world was really like cured me."

"Nothing the matter with your politics now, sir?" Hugh asked with a twinkling eye.

"Nothing; right as rain, true blue. What? eh? well, I

don't mind if I do drink your health—if you join me. A few glasses of wine will do you no harm."

When he was gone, Lady Amberwood came in and welcomed George very kindly, insisting on his staying to lunch with Hugh; she had just heard from the doctor that Hugh was taking him like a tonic, as he had done long ago.

Then Cecil, the next boy, came in and was coldly polite, warming up a little when Hugh advised him to impress George for the afternoon's cricket; and a sister came and was crushingly polite, and finally they all went to do the honors of the festival and the two friends lunched alone together, forgetful of diverging politics, and it was a red-letter day to both.

But the afternoon cricket, though brightened with the news Hugh had given him that Jim, the poet—who had unexpectedly become rich in spite of his devotion to the muse—had promised to pay for his articles and find him a good post after, was not the delight he had pictured. They were all there, the lads he had learned and played with and led through so many merry adventures, and they were all glad to be with him in their shy and awkward fashion; but the old intimate comradeship was gone, he was above them, an outsider here, as he felt himself in every word and look of his Deerham Place friends—except Hugh, whom he could see so rarely and so seldom alone. The loneliness that pursued him through infancy and boyhood had taken a new form, just as the growing divergence of Hugh's politics gave a sort of embittered intensity to his own. This shut-out feeling intensified his natural rustic shyness, so that he never quite overcame it, but hid it later under a rough and ready manner, that developed gradually into a genial, blunt candor that sat not ill upon him.

And when the games were over, and after the embarrassment of a few kind words from Lord Amberwood and Mr.

Hervey, both of whom supposed him to be the most unblushingly self-possessed, not to say brazen, youth of their acquaintance, he burst in upon the little group at the cottage, he felt more of an outsider than ever, though it was the only home he had ever known.

CHAPTER II

HAS anybody seen Sylvia this morning?" Lord Amberwood asked, after a long silence, during which he had more than once been addressed without replying, so intent was his gaze through delicate olive foliage at the deep, unwrinkled blue of the bay walled by mountains, in the shelter of which Mentone old town climbs and nestles, her lovely tower floating like a banner above her.

> "Who is Sylvia, what is she?
> That all our swains commend her,"

Jim asked absently. He was observing that the blue of the sea-rim was exactly the same as at Capri, and the paler shades inshore neither gray nor green, but a purer blue even than the sky, which had a tint of violet at the zenith.

"Not like azure wine today," he said, "but firm and clear as a jewel. Yet how the surf murmurs.—

> "Holy, fair, and wise is she;
> The Heavens such grace did lend her."

"I'm not so sure about her being wise, Jim," Lord Amberwood sighed, his gaze still intent on the red roofs piled above the sea, clear-cut in flooding light and mounting irregularly above steep, long lines of masonry specked with the rare green of tree or *loggia;* "she'll want all the sense she has now, be she ever so wise."

"Poor child!" Lady Amberwood said. "Let us hope it will soon be over.—How I wish I could get that beautiful

shining effect of Bordighera town on the shore under the headland into a photograph. Photography really is the most disappointing and aggravating thing on earth. Such an attractive creature, too. Let us hope it won't be for long!"

"Good Lord, Mother, do you want Sylvia to die?" cried Hugh, whose gaze happened to have fallen on the cypress-plumed cemetery on the height.

"Sylvia?

"She seemed a thing that could not feel the touch of earthly years,"

Jim quoted absently.

"Married, you absurd boy, married out of the trouble. Pass the ice, please. After all, the best part of ice is the tinkle. It's a sort of allegory of life. Jim, dear, you might make a poem on the ice."

"I did once," he acknowledged sadly; "but I put it in my pocket and went in through a thin bit, and it got lost when they were drying my clothes. One of the best things I ever did."

"And this," said Lord Amberwood pathetically, choosing a pear, "is one of the worst things Mostyn ever did."

"You don't suppose *he* did it, Gerald? He never does things, never did anything in his life—that's why women adore him. He lets them do the things. *She* married *him*. An impossible woman.—How lovely she was last night. Everybody asking who she was. And so unconscious and sweet all the time. She? Nonsense, Hugh, of course I mean Sylvia. Hardly out of mourning for her mother. Poor child."

"Don't let us tell her, Mother. Let's burn the beastly paper. It must be true. 'General the Hon. Sinclair Evelyn Arthur Mostyn'—all the blighter's blessed names—'to Alberta Georgina Maud, widow of James Bowers, Esq.,' of

Somewhere or Other, and daughter of Somebody Else, Esq., of Somewhere Else. Special licence; that means sneaked—you can't forbid the banns when there are none."

"She was so looking forward to the season," his mother sighed. "She had fixed dates already for the little dances they meant to give and got the general to prick off the names he wanted. She rather stuck at the Bowers woman, but gave in. She let him have *carte blanche* for the dinners. She was to have literary and artistic and sociological conversaziones on his regimental dinner nights. Such a charming hostess she would make. Poor darling, she has had none of the pleasures of youth, what with her mother's long illness—Stella regretted it at the last. She told me she would never have let Sylvia sacrifice herself as she did, if she had thought she could linger so long.—Just as she has scored such a success too."

"A preliminary canter," Lord Amberwood said. "Perhaps it won't be for long. The worst is it may hurry her choice before she has time to know her own mind. Sylvia's mind takes knowing. There's plenty of it. The Mostyn brains seem to have jumped the general and concentrated on his daughter."

"His daughter—heiress no longer, Gerald. There's only Stella's little settlement for her now. The Bowers woman will see to that. A predatory creature, a vulture, a harpy——"

"Steady, Evelyn, steady. The woman is a woman, after all."

"*Pur troppo.* You don't know women, my dear."

"Well, I used to think I knew one pretty thoroughly—though sometimes of late——"

"My aunt!" cried Hugh, seizing and stuffing the paper in his pocket; "here she comes!"

A slender figure in white, with soft dark eyes and a pale

face, was coming round from the other side of the hotel, acknowledging a bow here and a smile there from tables scattered on the terrace, and smiling brightly as she slid with gentle grace into the chair awaiting her and raised her veil and removed her gloves. Hugh had discovered that no two women do these things in the same way.

"I'm afraid I'm a little late," she said. "But not because I was making up for lost beauty sleep, Cousin Gerald. No, I had a lovely walk into Mentone along the promenade. Not too hot at all. A nice breeze off the sea and a splendid surf rolling in. Yes; it was a delicious ball. I've had so few; all are nice to me. What a floor, too, and what a band! But never again with you, Jim. Dear Lady Amberwood, did you see him cannon with me into the Prince and his pretty partner in pearls and opals? I don't know who she was; but if there had been any daggers handy, I don't know where Jim and I would have been—not comfortably lunching on all sorts of nice things here. What eyes, what a figure, what hair! black as Jim's iniquity, and dressed—*comme tout!*"

"H'm! I thought she might have been dressed a little more," Lord Amberwood observed.

"Perhaps she might have begun a little earlier and left off a little later," Lady Amberwood reflected, "but people must be *chic* though the heavens fall. And such ankles are not seen every day."

"Fortunately for the peace of man," murmured Jim.

"What have you been doing, you naughty boy?" Sylvia said suddenly to Hugh. "What are you trying to hide so ostentatiously? *Morning Post?* 'It is rumored that the Hon. H. Mascott——'"

"It's nothing about me," he assured her, keeping hold of one end of the paper she had snatched, "nothing, nothing

whatever. I—there's nothing in it, nothing—but I don't want you to see it."

"Sweet innocent, then why these blushes, this secrecy?"

"Well, it—it might give you a shock."

"Oh, do you think then that *nothing* can shock me?"

"Give me the paper, you tiresome boy," Lady Amberwood said with laughing impatience. "Eat your luncheon, Sylvia, you shall hear all about it later."

"You dear, foolish people," Sylvia said, patting the arm Lord Amberwood had in turn stretched out for the paper. "As if I didn't know all about it long ago,"—alas for Sylvia's veracity! "But of course you are sorry for me. Because"—she hesitated and asked for the salad-bowl, in which she seemed unable to discover exactly what she wanted—"because, from the dawn of history—how I wish I knew what these fluffy leaves are; but everybody seems to survive eating them—from the dawn of history, which means the days of nursery fairy-tales, as far as I can make out—how much nicer cream is than oil for salad—stepmothers," at each syllable a slippery strip of green was pinned vigorously with a fork to the dish and triumphantly prodded to a plate, "have been considered among the worst evils—to which—the flesh—is heir——"

"That," observed Lord Amberwood, when she paused to take breath in the triumph of having found fit expression for feelings proper to an embarrassing domestic situation, "is why we all feel some doubt as to the proper way of conveying our congratulations to you, my dear. As you justly observe, the relationship has long been regarded with prejudice—especially in fairy-tales."

"No punishment," Sylvia continued with a little sigh, as if yearning for the return of those days, "was considered severe enough for the crime of being a stepmother. In the case of Snowbelle's, if you remember, Hugh, the unfortunate

lady, stripped and imprisoned in a large cask studded inside with sharp nails, was rolled carefully down a steep hill, which as far as I remember had no ending, without exciting the slightest compassion. I, for one, gloated over it, simply *gloated.*" She looked up suddenly from the salad-bowl with a flash in her eyes which suggested that a picture of the second Mrs. Mostyn in a similar situation was not entirely unpleasant to her.

"Still," her host urged, "it was not only for being a stepmother that the poor lady was popped into the cask; there were other trifling errors to her account—poisoning people with apples and such indiscretions. The position of a stepmother is not entirely without drawbacks, Sylvia."

"And even a stepmother," Lady Amberwood said, "is a woman—and a sister. We might all become stepmothers, Sylvia," she sighed pensively.

"Let us hope there is no immediate prospect in your case, my dear," her husband added; "but in that event remember your lamented first's saying that a stepmother's life is not all jam, and that much depends upon the step-children."

"Especially when there are two lots," Sylvia gloomily acquiesced, remembering Mrs. Bowers' family of three. "Poor, poor father, why did I leave him even for these few weeks? I might have known he would get into some trouble. I had brought him up so carefully. He says it was rheumatism."

"Rheumatism made him marry that Bowers woman?" cried Hugh. "I beg pardon, Sylvia——"

"It took him to Bournemouth—if he had only come to Mentone, where you can't have rheumatism if you try!—and she was there—*without* her family," she added impressively. "She used to make up bridge tables for him in the evenings. She used always to forget to order carriages

to take her back—from wherever they happened to be—and it used always to be moonlight and he used always to have to see her home——"

"Really? For the good of both their rheumatisms? Quite so. Well, my dear, we must drink their healths—Roederer, I think. Hugh, if you'll catch the waiter's eye—By the way, where are they honeymooning?"

"At Monte Carlo," she replied tragically. "To arrive today, Hôtel de Paris." A hush of extreme horror fell on all except Jim, who had just thought of a sonnet on the cruelty of fate and was not quite sure if iridescent rhymed lawfully with pleasant.

Ice sparkled coolly in the pail borne out by a hurrying waiter; gold foil glittered in the sun; corks popped with a festive sound, and glasses brimming with hissing foam were in every hand.

"To General and Mrs. Sinclair Mostyn," Lord Amberwood said gloomily. "May all concerned be very happy." He drained his glass resolutely, as if it were Cato's hemlock or something recommended by a friend's doctor, and set it firmly on the table as one who had done a painful duty. Lady Amberwood, though sharing Tennyson's regard for "the foaming grape of eastern France," sipped hers with a face more suitable to vinegar or castor oil. The fourteen-year-old Violet, her eldest girl, and Jim, took theirs with the light heart of innocence, but Hugh like Tristram pledging Iseult in the golden cup of doom. Sylvia choked at the first sip, set her glass hurriedly down, spilling it with the shaking hand raised to cover her face, and fled.

"Beast!" cried Hugh, looking distractedly at the slender retreating figure, furious at the visible quiver of her shoulders. "Blighters like that should be locked up for life and kicked regularly twice a week. Sweep!"

"Don't be afraid," his mother said; "the kicking has

begun already: she has dragged him to Monte Carlo, which he loathes. That determined and selfish woman after Stella!"

"Hyperion to a satyr," Jim said, waking from his sonnet with a groan of sympathy.

Sylvia had thrown herself on her bed and sobbed her heart out. Little more than a year ago they had laid the mother she adored and had tenderly ministered to in the grave that ended years of bravely borne suffering, that never interfered with an unselfish care and tenderness for husband and child. She recalled the utter prostration of her father's grief, his tears, his turning to her like a child in his desolation, and her own gleam of pleasure, and even pride, in being able to comfort and sustain him in the absolute dependence he transferred from her mother to herself. She thought of the last sacred, tender words in which her mother had committed him to her care and asked her never to leave him. She thought of her own promise, and his constant leaning upon her during the year of mourning, and all their schemes and plans for the happier life they were to have led together. And now? She had left him—and none too soon, for the constant burden of a man's open and inconsolable grief in addition to her own had been no light thing to a sensitive girl in her teens—left him, at his own expressed desire, for these few weeks, while the house was being refurnished and redecorated, and he was married to "that Bowers woman"—married without a word to her. The veiling charm had fallen from life; it stood bare and bleak in hard light before her startled eyes.

The new Mrs. Mostyn's letter to her lay on the bed beside her, with its unblushing assumption that her father's home was no longer hers. "We shall always be so glad to see you, darling, small as our house will be, though of course you will want to spend most of your time with your own people——" "No doubt," Sylvia reflected, "especially with the

ownest of all." She learned further from this pleasing document, which was in strict confidence and *not* to be shown to the general, that immediate marriage was the only way to save her father from the brooding melancholy and mental and physical deterioration under which he had been rapidly sinking, that he needed "the constant care and counsel of a woman who knew the world, and was entirely devoted to him and able to save him from all worries, and restore him to that place in society from which his long virtual widowhood and recent bereavement had debarred him."

The general's own apologetic announcement was so weak that she threw it away, hoping to forget it. The gallant soldier, the chivalrous gentleman, the tender and indulgent father, had vanished like a cinematograph slide, leaving a handsome, self-indulgent squire of dames, weak and amiable, and nothing more.

When Sylvia left the table, Hugh jumped up and went a few quick paces after her, stopped, turned and paced up and down an alley of palms, hands in pockets, head down, lost in thought. Up and down he paced, up and down, for a good space. Presently his sister's light figure tripping after him, and her hand tucked in his arm with a little ripple of trivial chat, only half roused him, till her vigorous shake of lapsed patience brought him to himself.

"Naughty girl," he said; "run away to your music lesson. Poor Thumpelbangski won't have a hair left on his head if he's kept waiting any longer."

"He isn't waiting and his name isn't Thumpelbangski. Besides, they say it's a wig and he can't."

"Anyhow he did when you and Mother went wrong in the duet at the Charity Concert—tore it out by the handful."

"We didn't go wrong and it was his nerves. The mules are here, you seem to have forgotten, and Mother thinks

Sylvia is too upset, so there won't be any fun if you don't."

But they found Sylvia, neat and composed in a white costume, with a veil adjusted to a shady hat, at the entrance gate, patting a beautiful, soft-eyed donkey and imperilling its digestion with carrots and sugar, while the flat-hatted donkey-woman arranged Lady Amberwood's skirts, persuading her that the wicked-eyed mule on which she was seated had the sweetest disposition and easiest motion of all known beasts and a mouth like velvet; besides knowing the paths so well that it could go all the way with its eyes shut.

Violet was on the donkey at a bound and vainly trying to incite the grave and dignified beast to some deviation from its solemn routine pace; another donkey, laden with a tea-basket and cakes and rugs, that she called indifferently the sumpter-mule or the baggage-wagon, trotted up to Violet's and steadfastly refused to go anywhere except pressed close to Amabel the first donkey's side, and the procession started; the mule and its leader ahead, Jim, Sylvia, and Hugh bringing up the rear.

"Just like a funeral," Violet announced, finding that nothing could seduce the beautiful Amabel and her companion, the baggage-wagon, from the routine pace. "A cheerful one—of a stepmother."

Slowly and steadily the cheerful funeral wound under the soft shadowy brown of overarching platane boughs, that made a ribbed and vaulted roof, supported upon pale gray tree-columns; glimpses of purple sea were caught through the columns on the right, and violet-shadowed mountains through those on the left, whenever a cross-road broke the long line of shops and hotels, or a broad bed of mountain torrent swept down through a ravine and ran under a low-spanned bridge to the sea, where the soft, lulling surf-song was never still.

"It's not as if we were Germans," Violet complained,

when they met a procession of broad and genial citizens of that nationality slowly riding, with placid dignity and content, upon long-eared steeds of apparently inadequate breadth; "this donkey can't possibly take *me* for a German. I shall walk. I'm not going to crawl. Here! Stoppez-vous."

"Oui, oui, Mademoiselle," assented the smiling leader, with some mystic sign to Amabel, at which both she and the baggage-wagon shot forward with a jerk and landed Violet somewhere between the two, clinging ignominiously to the neck of each; till finding that any attempt to stop the donkeys resulted in sudden sprints, and all effort to quicken them made them stop dead, she resigned herself to the funeral pace, and, leaving the clean, bright town behind, they climbed a path of infinite steps, designed apparently for an elephant's stride though not wide enough for his body, and reached a rocky ledge winding along the steep fall of the ravine, on the extreme verge of which both donkeys and mule resolutely crept, deaf to remonstrance. Then with soundless step they passed through pine-woods and beneath the solemn beauty of olive boughs; behind them glimpses of velvety sea, calm and colored like a peacock's breast, and above, between its rugged double peaks, the white walls of the fortified hill village of St. Agnes, till they came to a halt in an olive wood carpeted with flower-inwoven turf.

There, at the foot of gray trunks, fantastically carved as if in stone by the storms and suns of centuries, but warm in the rich luster of a sinking sun, the baggage-wagon was unloaded and the spirit-lamp set burning without a flicker in magically still air, fresher than any breeze; and Jim emerged from poetic musings to hint that it might be well to put water in the kettle. Then it was discovered that Plon-Plon, the sumpter-mule, having kicked the water jar into a hollow of the rocky path, was helping Amabel to absorb

all trace of the crime before Jean, the mule, could break from the tree to which his sins condemned him, to share it.

Even Lise, the donkey-woman, could not recommend the water in the tanks full of those little green and blue frogs that make night vocal in the hillsides, and there was no sign anywhere of spring or mountain rillet. So Jim and Hugh set off with the jar to find some, wondering how things contrived to flourish so luxuriantly on drystone ridges as steep as houses, when two figures, stepping slowly and evenly up the path, each bearing a long, narrow barrel, the man on his shoulder, the woman on her head, came into sight. After a conversation in odds and ends of French and Italian, helped out by pantomime and British interjections, they made it plain that these barrels fetched from below were their only source of drinking water, and all the party remembered having passed the couple far down the path with the empty barrels. Jim and Hugh thought the man might have had a bigger barrel or the woman a smaller, and were rather shy of offering to buy what the others were only too pleased to sell and quite ready to give. The spirit-lamp was soon relighted and the kettle cheerily singing, the sky took on lovelier, ever-changing tints and mirrored them in a band of western sea, and Lise fell asleep on a bank of flowering rosemary, with Amabel and Plon-Plon browsing at her side and the wicked-eyed mule tied up at a respectful distance.

CHAPTER III

SYLVIA found it very pleasant to sit under the light tracery of pointed olive-leaves, lulled by familiar voices and cheerful laughter, and eat unwholesome pastry with the appetite of healthy youth; pleasant to look upon friendly faces smiling in the soft gold of afternoon sun, and handsome sunburnt Lise, with her good but self-willed beasts; it was an hour of golden peace; one could desire nothing more. There was Violet, fresh and sweet as her name; Lady Amberwood, beautiful and kind in her regal motherliness; Jim Follett, who was always a dear, even in his most absurd moments, and who she knew had a kind corner in his heart for her; there was her loyal comrade, Hugh, whose strong and sane young manhood was a pillar of strength; finally there was that glorious prospect of soaring peak and sunny, wooded steep, with changing shadows drawn in amethystine network over all.

If home happiness was destroyed, duty remained, and that was good enough for most people.

The beauty of great, silent mountains and the vast and vocal sea has always, in sunniest moments, a touch of tragedy; those majestic creatures of God must have endured some deep, Titanic agony, lofty, unimaginable, like the mute mystery of unknown anguish in the sculptured face that looks across sunny-blue lake to dark pine-forest and distant snow-peak at Lucerne, unchangeably gazing, unmoved and stern, above all the music and mirth. For the mountains and the sea know all, and remember even in their mirth; that is why their serene splendor has such power to uplift and calm.

But the man and woman with the water-barrels! Daily and more than once in the day must that patient, sunburned pair labor up the stony steep under that burden. And all that smiling luxuriance of vine, olive, and lemon rising terrace upon terrace upon the mountain flanks, every spadeful of soil carried up by man or beast, every ledge carved from living rock and buttressed with walls reared by patient human hands. What labor, what pain!

She had never thought of the laboring classes as less fortunate than others, till recently when an enthusiastic slumworker had taken her round her district—up ricketty stairs, down to dim cellars, through dull, long streets, dingy and featureless, and narrow alleys, airless and fetid; among dirty, neglected children, discordantly quarreling, rude and revolting, and she had heard and seen things that were a lifelong nightmare. All these might be amended, people told her, dilating upon sweating, bad housing, bad sanitation, on ignorance, idleness, and inherited vice. But furtively pressing silver into the woman water-carrier's hand a moment since, she had been touched by the brightening eye and flushing cheek that belied her deprecating, "Mais, Mademoiselle"; and conjectures as to the kind of life in that lonely hut yonder behind the vine-pergola and blossomed peach-tree made her heart ache. These people, she had heard, were poorer than the poorest farm laborer at home. Was it really true that all this fair structure of seeming civilization, comfort, esthetic and intellectual enjoyment, pure and refined emotions, and even spiritual peace was based upon the toil and want and degradation of the majority of mankind? Her friends round the spirit-lamp thought otherwise and took her to task for the dole to the water-carrier.

"Sheer self-indulgence, misplaced pity, weak sentiment. Nothing but drops in the ocean, but corrupting all the same," she heard. "You have had a moment's self-righteous

complacence and turned an honest and contented peasant into a venal, predatory creature, and destroyed her self-respect."

"I don't care. People *ought* not to be so poor, while we have everything."

"Well, suppose Jim were to sell his car and give the money to the poor of Mentone—who would be the better?" Hugh asked.

"Who? Why, the poor of Mentone, to be sure," cried Jim, waking up with sudden gayety. "And I'm blest if I won't. A pity to lose the car though," he reflected, remembering that this vehicle was an important factor in Violet's health prescription; "I'll give just what I gave for the car."

"Jim, Jim!" Lady Amberwood held up her hands in horror. "See the force of bad example, Sylvia, and mend your ways."

"I'd rather mend the fortunes of the poor," she said, beaming approbation upon Jim, from whom she had imbibed many heresies.

"As how?" Hugh asked. "Pool the world's wealth and share it out all round? Even George Darrell sees the folly of that."

"Even he?" cried Lady Amberwood. "When he's capable of *anything?* He has already made Hugh a radical."

"Rather he has put me off that, Mother. He's too great a man not to shed early prejudice, when he comes to see things as they are. He has seen too much of the seamy side of working men's lives, their drawbacks and limitations; and heard too much unreason about it. A soft-hearted chap; pity for the poorer classes spoils his perspective. To give them an equal share in the world's goods is his sole aim in life. It's his religion."

"He might have a worse," said Sylvia.

"It's the only good one," said Jim, suddenly waking from another dream.

"How you would appreciate George Darrell," Hugh said when the picnic party had broken up and the slow-paced donkeys gone on with Jim and their riders, leaving him stretched on the grassy slope a little below Sylvia, who sat at the twisted roots of an olive. Looking up at the pensive face framed by silky waves of hair under a shady hat, and backed by the gray olive trunk, he saw mental weariness and dejection in the clear brown eyes and fresh young mouth, usually so full of careless joy. He saw more than that, more perhaps than is to be found in the face of mortal maiden of years so few. How could such as she endure the daily companionship of the vulgar harpy to whom her father's weakness had sacrificed her? And those girls! All that torrent of coarse and ill-bred humanity let loose upon the sanctities of her home, her most intimate and sacred relationships. It was intolerable. She had been looking over ridge and glen to the golden limits of the sun-dyed sea, that lay a burning sheet between darkening hill-spurs, her thoughts full of who knew what, while they were talking of George Darrell's heresies, the sorrows and disabilities of poor men and the puzzling nature and structure of society, when she suddenly turned and smiled upon him, and something leaped up in his heart and made it beat wildly for one speechless moment.

He knew what it was; yet it took his breath away and made his eyes fall beneath her frank and friendly gaze. He had always been moved by the beautiful curve of those long-lashed eyelids, the transparent depth of golden brown eyes, and the indefinable something that gives charm and individuality to features. That face had come before him in the cold moonshine on the open veldt, when he lay torn with pain and parched with fever, among shattered, bleeding

forms, still in death or writhing in torture, that same sweet and serious face smiling now in the magic of the setting sun.

"I say," he broke out, mastering the wild and whirling emotion suddenly waking in his heart, "I am awfully upset about this wedding, don't you know. I'd give anything to undo it. How *can* you live with that—h'm, the recent Mrs. Bowers? It's—it's—it's a rotten thing."

"Oh, I shan't live with *her*," she said, with a quick smile; "I shall live with the present Mrs. Mostyn." The name came out with an effort; "quite a different person."

"Poor darling!" he sighed, all his heart in his voice.

"Nonsense. I'm not going to be pitied, Hugh. After all, my father is not an old man, and it's quite natural—though of course one can't be expected to go mad with joy over it."

"And those infernal young flappers. But let's hope they'll be packed off to some school."

"Poor girls! But, look, the baggage-wagon and the rest of them are off. I do hope your mother won't come to grief on that vicious mule; but we ought to be there to pick up the pieces if she does."

He thought not, but rose reluctantly and gathered her belongings together.

"No hurry," he objected, "it isn't dark for hours after sunset and I've a lot to say."

Then he relapsed into silence and listened to the cheerful nothings shouted between Sylvia and Violet, the latter jolted along on the unstable back of Amabel, who, owing to the steep descent, kept slipping from sight, rider and all, presenting nothing but her hind-quarters and tail to the rear-guard.

"I say," he began again; "were you very sorry when you saw my name in the butcher's bill?—We'd best hang

back out of sight, or that little owl, Violet, will be jerked clean down the ravine."

"Sorry? Why, you dear old boy, we very nearly cried our eyes out. How could we help it?"

"Yes—I think you would have cried for me. I say—" he stammered; "they say one wedding makes two—and I didn't mean to speak—*yet*—but for the one in the *Post* to-day. Only—my dear—I always adored you, always—and, if you tried, you might care enough—to marry me—marry me—at once."

"Hugh! You great baby! What are you talking about?"

She turned in the shadow of a carob and looked him straight in the eyes; the tender lingering light of after-glow was on his earnest quivering face and her own changed.

"Oh! my dear, what sudden, mad fancy is this?" she asked.

"No fancy, Sylvia, but true and lasting love," he replied, shyness and self-consciousness swept away in a wave of deep feeling. "I love you with a man's love, and with all my heart I desire you to be my wife."

Her eyes fell before the grave, restrained passion of his appeal. "Day of sorrow," she thought; "it wanted but this!" "Oh!" she gasped; "I do hope this is not my fault —or folly. I do hope there is some mistake. You are so young compared to me, a mere child. *I* have lived," she said gently, resuming her walk.

"No," he replied gravely, following her. "Age does not go by years, Sylvia. This thing has grown up with me, and it will stay."

"Let us hope not. You dear creature, you know as well as I do that because I've come to a bad bit in life you want to give me a hand over it—but this way would never do. And my bad bit is not as bad as all that."

"Oh, I know I ought not to have spoken yet, Sylvia. But later on——"

"Later on you would have wondered that you could ever have thought of it——"

"Sylvia!"

"You would——"

"Never; never! But Sylvia—what *will* you do?"

"I shall do well enough, no doubt. I am not so old as all that. What do people do when things get out of joint? Things happen every day, yet the sun shines, air is sweet, and wounds heal. And think, oh! Hugh, think of those joyless millions—hewers of wood and drawers of water—struggling for bare bread; and we moaning over crumpled rose-leaves."

"And you call me a child. Sylvia, little Sylvia," he said, with infinite tenderness and great longing to clasp her to his heart; she was so endearingly absurd.

"Women are always older than men," she said, confident in her platitude.

"Oh, are they?" He had lived and was old in knowledge of worlds undreamed of by her. "Well, some day you will be older," he concluded complacently.

"Thank you. I daresay I shall live to be a dowdy old frump. And so will you."

"Oh, no doubt I shall do my best to arrive at old fogeyhood."

"Poor boy," she thought, "so young, so malleable. His wild fancy forgotten already."

"But how did you come to conjure up this bogey of oppressed masses, Sylvia? When will you be comforted by the knowledge that happiness is not confined to any class, but on the whole pretty evenly distributed——"

"Oh, for pity's sake!" they heard in the voice of Lady Amberwood, whom they had overtaken at the gate of the

hotel by the convent, just as she was slipping from the uneasy eminence of ill-tempered Plon-Plon's back, to go through the grounds of the convent perched on the ridge that divided the two torrents, while Lise led the four-footed company along the mule-path below the wall; "still struggling with submerged tenths and toiling millions? Come and look at the convent. They've driven the monks away, but one can still see how lovely poverty may be—voluntary and consecrated poverty."

"Poverty? Bread and clothes, house and leisure. What can you want more?"

"Oh, you just ask the workhouse people, my dear Sylvia. And instead of a convent give *me* the water-barrel and the husband and the little pergola-fronted house under the ridge. When you come to think of it, your and Jim's Utopia would be one huge workhouse—with nobody to pay the rates."

"The State," Jim suggested, meekly trying to help her up the root-tangled path through the pine-wood.

"The inmates would be the State," Hugh said, coming to his mother's rescue just as Jim's ineffectual piloting nearly landed them both flat on the path over a snaky root.

Up there on the ridge it was very sweet and peaceful. The chapel and deserted convent, simple almost to meanness, were not without the dignity of uncompromising poverty and uncomplaining sadness. *Clôture,* chalked roughly over the convent door, told the simple and poignant story in a word; a solitary bell creaked mournfully in the light breeze, the penthouse and weathercock above it slanted ready to fall; else there was no dilapidation. Grass grew on the steps and pellitory in the walls, a double rank of cypresses made a still and verdant cloister on the low-walled plateau, their dark and solemn spires, dim in the mystic light of moonrise and afterglow, seemed to brood patiently on some far-off,

long-deferred but unquenchable hope. All, even Violet, became silent as they passed into the dusky colonnade, their figures shadowy, their steps soundless on the sandy path, as if half aware of invisible presences; the silence seemed full of hushed music, while faint echoes of angelus bells and chanted vespers stirred the dark, still cypress boughs.

"Warte nur, warte nur," the cypress tops whispered to Hugh; and then Sylvia turned in the magic light, her face reflecting the exaltation in his heart, and their souls seemed for a moment to meet and mingle, as, with a throb of emotion that drove the blood from his face and made his eyes—honest, gray-blue, English eyes, kind, sometimes cold—points of burning flame, he swore silent, life-long allegiance to her.

Sylvia, at first vaguely troubled by the gaze that walled her in a ring of enchanted fire, was soon reassured by a quiet smile, and turned with relief to the broad, velvet-dark sea shimmering silver in the moon's path, down which so many magic barks sail dream-laden. Even the bogey of over-burdened, hungering millions folded its baleful wings and vanished, as she leaned against the silvered limb of the tall eucalyptus guarding the entrance at the top of the steps, and wondered at the perennial magic the ever-fresh young moon casts upon wearied earth and hungering sea, and looked at the unpainted wooden cross spreading arms of welcome between the sentinel trees.

"But where is the *Spes Unica?*" she asked, remembering the inscription in black letters round the three symbolic nails, and staring hard at a bare wooden cross, plain and clear in the milky light.

"Why, it's gone!" cried Lady Amberwood, incredulous of her own eyesight. "O sweet Democracy, holy and happy equality and fraternity! first they shut the people out of their church, and now they have taken away their Only Hope."

"Or was it perhaps wind and weather?" Jim meekly suggested.

"Was it wind and weather that banished crucifixes from French courts of justice?" Sylvia asked.

"Where murderesses are always acquitted, provided they are attractive and their motives vile enough," Lady Amberwood murmured.

But Hugh said nothing; he listened always to the whisper in the mystic cypress boughs: *"Warte nur."*

And "I will wait," he vowed silently to himself.

CHAPTER IV

"IT'S no use to blink at it, Sylvia," General Mostyn confessed a few days later during an almost stolen interview with her in the fairyland above the hanging gardens at Monaco; "I've come a cropper this time and no mistake. I ought not to have married again—it doesn't suit me at all. I like a club life and freedom—such as I had with your dear mother—and looked forward to with you. But you'll like Verena, Sylvie. Having no sisters was hard luck for you—Verena's a nice little thing. At your age a girl wants a—moth—a woman that knows the ropes to bring her out and look after her. A man's no good at that, don't you know. You've run wild too long, your dear mother's illness was hard on you—you want a lot of looking after and polishing up. They're merry little grigs, those two. You'll find they'll brighten you up wonderfully, rub the old-fashioned rust off and make you as young as you ought to be. You'll soon lose your grave airs and give over brooding now. A comfort to think I have done so well for you, Sylvie. We must make the best of it," he added, turning away with a fine, resolute air, belied by a handkerchief furtively used.

Sylvia said nothing, but thought much, looking with steady, unseeing gaze at the purple sea that broke on soft surf at the foot of the rocky steep and splashed the agaves and prickly pears falling among a tangle of flowers down the cliff and embowering the low wall on which she leaned. A nightingale was singing fitfully from a thicket of six-foot-high geraniums, topped by flowering mimosa, palm and olive

trees; there was a sound of dipping oars and ripple of light laughter, as a boat full of youth and pleasure shot by.

She wondered at the gardener she saw let down the cliff in a basket, clipping sprays here and planting there something that began to grow visibly the moment it touched soil; wondered at the mountain spurs running out into the dark sea, at the strange little principality niched between two great countries, above all at the bright dream-city on the sea-bound rock with its thirteenth century fortress and brand-new cathedral, which seemed to be cut out of frozen snow and probably an enchantment that would melt into the blue sky it pierced the moment the right word was spoken. Perhaps it was all enchantment and her father had never made that mad marriage. Perhaps he was not standing behind her under the olive, his face turned from all the beauty, with a handkerchief crushed in the hand he was furtively restoring to his pocket; perhaps there was no powdered stepmother diffusing clouds of strong scent—she wondered why strong scents suggest moral depravity as much as vulgarity—perhaps there were no slouching, slangy, hard-voiced stepsisters, no perplexity and no passionate hate. If only the right word could be spoken and all the baleful embroilment vanish. If only the late Mrs. Bowers, Verena, and Gladys could melt into that limbo into which so many people and races once walking this enchanted rock—worshiping Hercules or honoring Mahomet, sailing that magic sea in hollowed trees, triremes, galleons, wooden three-deckers, and, for all people could tell, carrying Julius Cæsar, Hannibal, Nelson, St. Paul, and a great variety of sinners—had long since vanished, leaving no wreck behind.

"If only it wasn't for that infernal brother of hers," her father said, turning back in a more cheerful frame; "Alberta is all right; Mrs. Mostyn is an excellent woman, my dear, and remarkably handsome; people turn round to look at

her wherever she goes." (So her stepdaughter had observed, attributing this public interest to scents and powder and sumptuous raiment of a challenging description.) "A woman who makes a sensation wherever she goes. It's the warmth of her heart that has brought her to this pass."

"She seems to have lent him money?" Sylvia asked. Her mind, unversed in the ways of the world and the devious nature of monetary transactions, was hopelessly bewildered. "But why didn't she tell you before marriage?" she added with the pitiless directness of honest innocence.

"He robbed her of everything, every blessed farthing. Took advantage of her ignorance. Blackguardly thing to take advantage of a woman's ignorance. An absolute sweep. Those poor fatherless girls! Well, my dear, we must make it up to them. All the same, I don't see why Verena should have your room. *She* didn't arrange and choose the things in it. I shall put my foot down firmly upon that."

Nor did Sylvia see why the new-comer should seize on her property, as she undoubtedly would, if it depended on decisive action on the part of that frail son of Adam who happened to be her father.

"I shall put my foot down firmly on that, Sylvie," he repeated, emboldened and reassured by the sound of the brave words. "Never mind, little girl, we shall get along somehow," he added, inspired by a fine sense of paternal authority and affection. "We shall get along, Sylvie."

"We'd better, if we are to be at the hotel in time for tea," she said, going through the enchanted wood in advance of him.

"Perhaps I'd better go on ahead," he said, joining her on the broader walk outside by the cathedral; "not to look as if we'd been together, don't you know. And look here, you might ask me how the shooting went. And I might ask you what you thought of the cathedral, eh?"

"Oh! Daddy, Daddy, neither you nor I are the stuff conspirators are made of. We'd better just hold our tongues. We cannot fib gracefully. But I should really like a look into the cathedral." She turned at the steps before the west entrance to nod and smile to him as he strode away, a fine soldierly figure, carrying his years with a jaunty grace.

"Righto!" he called back cheerily. "And look here, Sylvie," he turned and came back, grave and embarrassed; "would you mind next time we wish one another good-night or good-morning before *her,* not kissing me? Women are such queer creatures. She says it's bad form, Heaven help her."

"Dear father," Sylvia sighed, slowly going up the broad steps fronting the sea, sick at heart. "Well, at any rate I needn't endure any more of *her* crocodile kisses, then."

The honeymoon was now at the full and Sylvia had enjoyed many opportunities of improving her acquaintance with the late Mrs. Bowers, none of which had improved her estimate of the lady's personality or lessened her dislike to her sudden irruption into the family circle. Yet she thought she had done all she could to overcome her dislike and make the best of the position. People had preached to her, her father had apologized to her and, worst of all, the girls had gushed to her in their choicest slang on the newest and thickest stationery, reeking with scent, in immense sprawling caligraphy done apparently with a poker and signed with such flourishes as might be made with carpet brooms, painting vivid pictures of awfully jolly times together in a lurid future of perpetual pal-ship. Their mother had mingled loathed and highly perfumed caresses and occasional venomous little verbal stabs with gush of a less slangy but more powerful description, to all of which she had responded in the politest manner and with the warmth of an icicle.

She feared she was a wicked and selfish girl and was quite sure she was a very unhappy one. A pity; one might have been, one had been, so happy. Seen from the flight of sun-warmed marble steps, whence the cathedral rose snow-white into the blue, the world was so beautiful and so gay; one broad smile of sunny joy lay over all that pure and vivid color and rich luxuriance of blossom and verdure and clean bright masonry of town and tower, villa and palace. Life was good and earth lovely; and people get used to things. But dear father—to see him pained and humiliated, conscious of folly and weakness, sentenced, and deservedly, for life—

The woman who had married him was insanely jealous; she was bent on putting them asunder; home was gone; her place in it usurped; no corner left for her. Her father had been her all; she had promised her dying mother never to leave him, never to marry, for his sake. She had stifled certain happy feelings, crushed a dream that was very sweet; the boy had gone elsewhere to be healed, and Sylvia, heart-broken, was vowed to perpetual maidenhood. She had been unable to make girl friends in her secluded life; she had no brother. Forlorn Ariadne, staring at the vanishing sail on this same glowing sea, had only lost a heartless light o' love, of whom she was probably well rid, while Sylvia had lost a kind and delightful father. No one was left but these few now at Mentone; chief among them, her good comrade Hugh; she stood alien and alone in the cheerful life humming past the cathedral steps,—happy children, priests, soldiers, foreign visitors, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives—like Ruth "amid the alien corn," she thought, contemptuous of her own heart-sickness.

Then she turned from the dazzle of blue and gold afternoon, pushed open the heavy door-valve, slipped into a cool breadth of shadowy stillness, black by contrast, and

feeling her way blindly, sank into the nearest chair in the empty church.

Slowly, very slowly, the darkness thinned and the massive proportions of the Byzantine structure grew distinct and beautiful in soft light, shot with long beams of amber sunshine that seemed in their still radiance to breathe a life not of this world. No whisper ruffled the deep silence of the solemn and simple magnificence, no gaudy cheapness of ornament jarred on the pure splendor of rich marble and massy column, while glimpses of gold and colored mosaic and bright inlay of varied marbles in and about the sanctuary in the flood of light falling entirely from the clerestory windows, gave hint of some mystery of glory unrevealed.

The deep silence, rhythmic from very intensity, the pure and peaceful light, seemed to fill and animate the solemn beauty of the building, like its soul. All the sound and beauty, fret and fury, stir and strain of the world outside the walls was banished as completely as if it had crumbled to dust. Here was no spell of association, no magic of past ages, no record of saint or warrior, prophet or king; neither stain of time nor ravage of misuse, only beauty and purity of color and proportion, the glory of mellow light, and the hallowed purpose of the building's dedication manifest in faint odors of incense and symbolic structure of detail with a prophecy of infinite hope. Nothing could be more restful.

She hardly knew when she slipped to a kneeling posture, or why the chair-ledge in front was sprinkled with warm drops and her hands and face wet with the same; nor had she been aware of a gentle rustle of children stealing in and grouping round confessionals to wait their turn, when some sudden small sound of step or whisper broke the spell, and she looked up to gathering shadow and lessening glory in the vast spaces.

Calmed and cheered, with uplifted heart and inward peace,

she rose and left the church; the meaning of life seemed clearer and its hard things easier and of less moment, and the palm and olive-sprinkled gardens fringing the sea in radiance of golden sunset and all the cheerful sounds of everyday life more enjoyable. Running down the steps, dashing round the cathedral corner, threading a devious way between conscientious, spectacled Germans, Baedeker in hand, and frivolous, bright-eyed nursemaids, forgetful of their scattered charges, she flushed with glad surprise at nearly cannoning into the tall and motionless figure of a man. It was Hugh, brown and healthy, and English from head to foot, delightfully English, even to the cold, proud look of tolerant content, that deigned no look or word of joy at finding the face he had been waiting and watching for so long.

"Ripping church," he said; "looks like a wedding-cake. And all built out of roulette, eh?"

"To me it looks more like marble."

He turned an indulgent glance on the face at his side: "You've been crying," he said, with a sudden ferocity that masked infinite tenderness, pity and pain.

"Women often cry—especially for nothing," she replied, conscious of the glance but only half aware of what the voice concealed.

"*She*'s not one to cry for nothing," he thought, clenching his hands till the nails went into them and frowning heavily, while they threaded the quiet streets of the enchanted city and wound down the lovely, rock-hung road to the harbor. Many a precipitous slope was there, but no barrel lined with nails handy to pack and roll an inconvenient stepmother in. Second marriages (where a lovely young daughter was concerned) should be made illegal, and widows like the recent Mrs. Bowers labeled *Peril de Mort,* like electricity pillars.

"See you some day in town," he said, when they reached

the Monte Carlo tram and parted; Sylvia unpleasantly startled to hear that he was leaving there and then for home; Hugh, watching her from the car window, downcast but with hope unquenched. *"Warte nur,"* he thought.

It was so late when she reached the Hôtel de Paris that white lies were quite unnecessary, and her father, a little overcome with prolonged tea-drinking and conjugal *tête-à-tête,* asked with genuine ignorance where on earth she had been so long.

"All that time in the cathedral?" he echoed, disregarding her dutiful allusion to his pigeon-shooting. "Well, I *am*—but the poor child wants some tea, Alberta. She's dead beat."

"Scarcely at this hour, my dear. You forget, Sylvia," Mrs. Mostyn said with patient acerbity, "that you were to have met Count Von Potovski this afternoon. He waited an hour—one hour by the clock—the patience of an angel, so handsome, such a disappointment."

"Well, I'm glad I missed him. But I did not understand that he was coming by appointment, least of all on my account," the culprit said cheerfully, "or I should have asked to be excused, for I don't like the man. But I am sorry to have put you out. Time slips away so quickly."

"No doubt it does, in *pleasant company.* You mentioned no name, dearest," Mrs. Mostyn sighed with gentle resignation. "Of course one cannot expect consideration for others from such a shockingly spoiled child—only children are invariably selfish, even with the most careful upbringing. You were most unfortunate in yours, darling—not that I blame your mother."

"You'd *better* not!" cried Sylvia, with flaming eyes.

"Steady, Sylvie, steady!" her father said, gently drawing her away and turning such a look on his Alberta as she had already learned to beware of, even in these honeymoon

days: "Let them have their heads, once they take bit in mouth," was an axiom she had gathered from that experience in husband training, that many supposed to have brought the unfortunate Bowers to an untimely grave.

"Poor dear Von Potovski," she murmured softly. "But I daresay his disappointment will do him no harm. And when you know more of him, Sylvia, I shouldn't be surprised if you found him quite a nice fellow, after all. Though of course not equal to *Cousin Hugh,*" she added, with a little laugh that made Sylvia admire herself immensely for not knocking her down, and the general respect himself for a similar self-control. It also made him think of something accidentally overheard the day before.

He had been sitting in a cozy corner of the hotel lounge—a place wise people never chose for confidential talk—barricaded and concealed behind his *Times,* when the sound of his wife's name made him prick up his ears.

"I quite agree with you, Alberta," a woman's rather hard voice said. "Your girls will never have the ghost of a chance till the encumbrance is off your hands. Quite a distinguished style of beauty and the *je ne sais quoi* that goes to men's hearts." The speaker made some little rings of smoke curl from her cigarette in a thoughtful pause. "Odd to think it's not a marrying style, though. Besides, nobody will ever be good enough for Mademoiselle. That sort always overstays its market."

"No; she'll not go off easily," the other sadly assented, skillfully flicking cigarette ash into a distant tray. "Simply stay on and put my two in the shade; the poor things won't have the ghost of a chance. Frankly speaking, Gwen, they are not much to look at; who would ever imagine they were *my* daughters? The Bowers type absolutely. And then the horror of four women herding together in one house, with one small and insignificant male"—at this the

general had looked up sharply and glared at them over his *Times* with a fierce crackling of the paper that was lost upon them—"to balance them."

"Ghastly! Positively indecent! But how about the cousin? A handle to one's name is something even in these degenerate days."

"Oh! but a pauper, Gwen dear, an absolute pauper! Give me rather a nice, rich Jew."

"Dearest, I wish I could. Or even a good plump banker."

"The girl is well enough; she ought to marry well, if she plays her cards ever so simply. If only Verena and Gladys would try to catch something of her manner, as I often tell them. And with a little pains she might be managed. But her father backs her up in all her whims and affectations. So ridiculously fond of her, and crazy to keep her at home, perfectly crazy."

"Fathers often are. Selfish. And so short-sighted. Well, dear, we must hope for the best. Why not Von Potovski? And if I can help you off with Sylvia I certainly will."

With these pleasing remarks fresh in mind, General Mostyn contrived to linger behind with Sylvia when his lady commanding officer sailed majestically to the lift to make the extensive and lengthy toilet proper for the diversion Sylvia was to share with her parents that evening.

"What is all this about Hugh, my dear?" he asked, drawing her hand through his arm, and pacing the brilliantly lighted corridor with her. "Is there anything between you?"

"Nothing. Besides, he's too young. A mere child to me."

"Just as well that he is. Nice fellow. I always liked Hugh Mascott. But he must marry money, poor chap. No way out of that. Well, that's all right. You've been so much together, that I was in a bit of a funk about it. For I couldn't do without you, Sylvie, especially now. You won't

leave me, little one, you won't leave me, will you?" His voice quivered and tears sprang to Sylvia's eyes.

"Dear father," she said, steadying her voice. "How could I? I have promised. As long as you want me."

"Then that's all right," he said with cheerful reassurance, and turned from her, softly whistling, to go into the billiard-room. He turned again at the door, and the sight of the light, lithe young figure, disappearing like a gleam of sunshine up the broad stairs in her fresh and refined beauty, gave him a pang. He knew that he ought not to demand any such sacrifice of his only child. But how live without her? What other shield was there from Alberta? Besides he shared their mother's opinion that Verena and Gladys were not very marketable wares, as well as her strong desire to dispose of them to the best advantage.

Meanwhile, Iphigenia nerved herself afresh for the sacrifice, glad at heart to find that at least it was acceptable, and that she was necessary to her father's peace and comfort.

She went back to England with the Mascotts a few days later, and made the little house she had prepared for her father and herself ready for the invaders, and gave up her own special sitting and bedroom to Verena and Gladys, reserving only some books and small treasures unvalued by these others and contenting herself with a small north room under the roof, furnished with odds and ends. Hardest of all, she listened meekly when Mrs. Mostyn, on her return from her honeymoon, met her filial welcome by snatching the offered keys and household books from her hands, finding fault with all her arrangements and regulations, and expressed her intention of putting things upon a new and proper footing without delay, at once turning the house upside down and discharging and replacing all the servants.

But Sylvia was not an angel, and perhaps even Iphigenia's heroism would not have been equal to a daily presentation

of her neck to the sword; nor was she particularly wise for her years. She rebelled against the invasion and occupation of her father's study, in which the worthy general, it is true, studied little but his own comfort. She was unable to accept the noisy pal-ship or share the interests of her new sisters, who resented her chill civility, not entirely without reason, as haughty superiority, and continually nagged at and provoked her, supported by their mother, who inconsistently widened the gulf between them by privately holding up Sylvia's manner, her voice and speech, her bearing and taste in dress, for their admiration and example. Sylvia soon began to pine and lost color and flesh; the perpetual friction, from which the general vainly tried to dissociate himself, made the house uninhabitable and brought his ease-loving temperament to a state of exasperation that did not always spare his daughter, while his wife's insane jealousy grew to such a pitch and resulted in scenes so painful that the father and daughter scarcely dared speak to each other in her presence.

So one fine morning, after a tempestuous breakfast—a meal he usually kept peaceful by the simple device of taking it late and alone—General Mostyn called Sylvia into his study and locked the door. Then he sat down at his writing-table and burst into tears. Sylvia turned from him, went to the window and looked out into the dusty sunshine, till he had time to recover.

"I am so sorry," she said, then rather drearily; "but what *can* we do?"

"No use to blink it, Sylvie. There's only one thing, my dear." He paused with a heavy sigh. "You can't stand this; it's killing you. And it's making me wretched; I'm losing flesh. She's the deuce and all when her will is crossed; and she's bent on turning you out. We hadn't been married a day before she began at it—though I didn't

catch on at first. I'm afraid—I'm afraid it must be good-by."

"Good-by?" The bewilderment in the look she turned on him cut him to the heart.

"We could see one another—now and then; perhaps go on a little trip together, a week-end or something," he said, looking straight before him and hardening his voice.

"After all," he went on, while she stood silent with the same bewildered look, "you couldn't keep single—long—a girl like you——" his breath caught and he coughed a sob away.

She understood now with a bitter pang tempered by a curious sense of relief.

"I've tried everything," he sighed, "but I can't stand by and see you treated like this. I was a selfish beast to marry again—I can't unmarry. And you will always be my own little girl—nothing can undo that, thank Heaven."

She put her arms round his neck and kissed him silently, letting her face rest against his for a little.

"I might go on a round of visits," she said presently; "I want a change."

But when she started cheerfully, and to Mrs. Mostyn's profound content, on her round, she knew, and her father knew, that the same home would never again be theirs.

CHAPTER V

HESBA had been greatly dismayed at the effect of her sudden reproach upon her husband on the coming-of-age birthday; she would have given anything to recall those too swiftly-winged words, repented even while they were taking flight. But that being impossible, she was sinking in depths of despair when George, his cricket finished, suddenly burst in upon the trio, a spirit of youth and joy, and turned the current of her thoughts to happiness. His visit could not have been more timely and comforting: it set her bustling in glad excitement on hospitable care; the mere sight of him was hope and strength; she delighted in his healthy, handsome looks, his fine voice and beautiful, pure intonation, and even found signs of the secret grace Mr. Burton had spoken of in his cheery face.

But Dan showed little pleasure in George's visit; he seemed almost to resent it as an intrusion. After a few questions—what he was doing, how he had come by this unexpected holiday—the old man lapsed into his usual religious divagations, dwelling much on his own firm assurance of salvation. His creed was, that once so assured, repentance was no longer needed; all was forgiven and forgotten. Besides, sin was impossible to the truly converted; little failings, infirmities of the flesh there might be, actual sin never. Yet both Hesba and Mr. Burton had imputed something very like sin to him. It was true that Hesba was nobody—but Brother Burton—that went to the quick.

George listened with the return of an old, forgotten weariness heavy upon him, his mind quick with other things.

Something in the patient wistfulness of Hesba's lined face touched him; he wished he could open his heart to her and quicken her failing vitality with the young and joyous hopes of his own. Well, she should walk yet in silk attire and sit with folded hands in firelit winter luxury and sunny, summery peace.

He went off too early next morning—though not too early for the cup of coffee Hesba had ready for him—to see Dan who was still in bed.

He was still in bed the next day, refusing food and driving Hesba away with pettish words when she asked what ailed him, and the next day he hardly seemed to know that the familiar face bent over him was the doctor's.

"Sinking slowly, very slowly," the doctor told Hesba in another room. "Natural decay. He'll pass gently, probably in sleep. Premature; but he has had a hard life and fretted much."

Then Hesba went in, crying softly, and told the old man very gently that his long-desired passage to a better world was at hand; and humbly asked his forgiveness and blessing.

But instead of the gladness she expected, a horror of great darkness fell upon Dan Grinham; his faith, put to the test in face of the great reality, gave way; all make-believe and insincerity dropped like a cast garment from his soul, and left it naked and shivering in the sight of his Maker. All in a moment the pains of hell got hold upon him, and his sins sprang up and surged round him, grim, stark, innumerable. "Half bad temper and half laziness; that's your religion," an exasperated relation had told him once, and now the phrase echoed like a menace through his failing brain, and he knew it was true. What Hesba had said of his neglect of George and occasional savage outbreaks was true. George was not yet converted; it was his fault; the blood of the

boy's lost soul would be required at his hands, and the blood of how many more that he had been called to guide.

"Whatever to do with the poor old heart, I don't know," Hesba wept into her apron, when the rector, hearing of the illness, called. "Him that have preached to others, to be a castaway. Him that have testified his life long. Him that have converted so many, to give way at the end."

"Don't you give way, Mrs. Grinham. Take courage. Very holy people often suffer this darkness at the last—but only for a time. Ask him if I may come up and see him for a minute."

"No fear," she sobbed, "he won't have the minister hisself sent for, let alone you. He allows he's a castaway."

"He might like the sight of a friendly face, Mrs. Grinham. We all do at the last."

She shook her head, sobbing still under her apron.

"Only tell him I've looked in to ask how he is. Go up and tell him, that's a good soul."

"He wun't listen, I tell ee, he wun't listen. He've a flung the Bible clean away into my vaäce."

But to Hesba's intense surprise, Dan caught eagerly at the visit, and when the rector's friendly face, full of respectful pity, appeared in the doorway and his deep, grave voice uttered the salutation of the Office for the Sick, "Peace be to this house," his distraught face calmed a little and he seized and clung to the visitor's hand as if his salvation depended upon it, and poured out his soul's anguish to an attentive and sympathetic ear, well accustomed to dying words.

The visit was long and left the sufferer soothed and inclined to sleep a little. "I'll come again tomorrow," Mr. Hervey said to the bewildered Hesba, when he left her with some words of hope and comfort. He came the next day and many days following, always, if only for an

hour, bringing the peace the Church commands into the house.

About a week later, at the end of a long and busy day, all the house being asleep, his pen dropped and a fond look bestowed upon a favorite pipe that lay invitingly to hand on the study mantelpiece, Mr. Hervey heard a sound of gravel rattling against the window, and distinguished the voice of the much-scolded Ben calling him to come at once to Daniel Grinham; and, snatching hat and coat, he hurried to the cottage, where he stayed till dawn, when the old man passed away with a smile of perfect peace, still clinging, as he had clung all through the night, to the ministering hand.

The burial service in Deerswell churchyard a few days later was hardly ended, when Mr. Burton, who had been intending to pay the sick preacher a pastoral visit, but had not been able to find time, stepped round from the other side of the grave and went up to the rector.

"So *you* were with our dear brother at the last," he said, "a privilege denied to me. What a triumphant passing it must have been. Did he testify? What were his last words? They should of course have told us how near the final scene was, and I should have been there with others. Nothing is more edifying to the Christian believer than the last moments of an eminent professor."

Mr. Hervey closed his book slowly and looked into the open grave and across it at the chief mourner, who appeared to be too much lost in painful thought to observe this interruption. Poor old Hesba was too deeply stricken to be present.

"Quite so," he replied slowly. "But the privacy of those last moments is a sacred thing, Mr. Burton."

"It is said that there was a falling away at the last and that the connection was purposely kept from him. He was denied the ministrations of those of his own faith, Mr.

Hervey, denied the last and greatest opportunity of testifying."

"Things said are often better not heard," the rector replied, turning back to the vestry accompanied by Mr. Burton; "Hesba, poor soul, was under the impression that you had been told of her husband's condition."

"Did Hesba send for you?"

"No; I went, of course, as soon as I heard of the illness."

"You were there day and night?"

"Every day and the last night."

"And you will say nothing of what passed?"

"Only that he died as a Christian should, humble and penitent."

"You will allow a grave imputation to rest upon the faith of an eminent, Christian professor and put a stumbling-block in the way of those who looked to him for spiritual guidance?"

"Baseless gossip is no imputation, Mr. Burton. I have said that Daniel Grinham's end was that of a humble and penitent Christian. That is enough. I can and will say no more."

With all his efforts the minister could extract nothing more from Mr. Hervey. He went so far as to allude to Popish practices, Jesuitry, the abominations of priestcraft and confessional secrecy, and from that day the good understanding between the minister and the rector ceased, the former alluding to the latter with melancholy as a lapsed brother, a secret and intriguing Romanist, practicing the tyrannies of an idolatrous creed under the mask of a minister of a reformed Church.

The scattered congregation of the little chapel, and those accustomed to Dan Grinham's flying visits and preaching elsewhere, were indignant at the indecent haste of the funeral, which prevented any assembling and speaking at the

grave; many only heard of the death after the burial, which was timed to suit George, who had had great difficulty in coming at all, so soon after his stolen holiday.

Finally a paragraph went round the Press and rose up again years afterwards as an argument for Church disestablishment. It told in florid style how a bigoted and tyrannical country parson, taking advantage of the sudden and serious illness of an aged and influential nonconformist preacher, forced himself uninvited into his cottage, and, excluding all of his own creed from the sick-room, frightened the poor old man into a semi-delirious state of superstitious terror, in which he denounced the distinctive tenets of his denomination and died, believing himself a castaway, soon to be followed by his broken-hearted widow, killed by the shock of the eminent preacher's tragic lapse from the faith.

Hesba was, in reality and quite naturally, stunned and bewildered by the loss of the companion and tyrant of her long life, to whom she had always looked for guidance in things spiritual, with devoted and affectionate admiration, tempered by secret wifely consciousness of her own saner and surer judgment in practical affairs, and mixed with indulgent feminine contempt for the failings and weaknesses natural to that eccentric creature, *man*. And the sudden extinction of that bright and guiding light of professing Christians, accompanied by none of the dignity and circumstance, the last words, the edifying death-bed, the general mourning and moving pulpit eulogy that should have attended it, made her loss all the more sad and bewildering.

So she sat silent and alone, rejecting the companionship George tried to procure for her, her life without aim, the garden, the household duties, the fussy fowls, the wise bees, the hungry and profitable pigs, the serviceable and patient donkey, neglected and forgotten, and even Ben unscolded in his worst delinquencies. She sat thus staring straight before

her, with a sorrowful wonder in her tired eyes and deaf to all ministrations and attempts to comfort for a few sad weeks; then she failed and passed almost imperceptibly away, and George, still full of half-formed plans for her care and comfort, found himself turning away from a second grave, absolutely alone in the world.

Alone, but by no means desolate. The warmest feeling his grandfather's death stirred in him was pity; Hesba's clinging dependence called out something warmer and better; he had hoped to secure a happy old age for her, beginning to recognize her long-veiled affection in these weaker years, as well as the hard and somber life of integrity, denial, and lovelessness that had preceded them. But now he was free, untrammeled, unbiassed, with life spread out before him, an open road in a broad and boundless country leading over many a breezy height and sunny slope to the Land of Heart's Desire and the shining summits of Fame. The sky was cloudless above him and the air sweet and quick with the vivid promise of spring. There was now no bar between him and the great purpose of his life for which all his energies were to be bent: to deliver the oppressed, to put down the mighty from their seats, to fill the hungry with good things, to uplift the humble from the mire and set him with princes. What was to be done with the mighty and the princes he had never considered; nor had it occurred to him that he was aiming personally at the power and eminence that his social creed condemned. In these unripe days he willed strongly and therefore could strongly, so he thought, unconsciously following Nietzsche's "Will to Power"; but as yet with innocence and high purpose unstained.

At this time he read much but without direction or concentration, like a wanderer in a strange climate, gathering fruit of unknown quality, deadly or nutritious.

"If you go on swotting at this rate," Hugh told him in

one of their rare meetings, "you'll go dead silly. You'll soon be no better than a pasty-faced, flabby-muscled city clerk."

At this George felt his biceps and took to athletics and gave himself such recreation as came in his way, which was a lonely one. He joined a debating society and soon became the star of it. Some sort of social intercourse, which bored him immensely, came to him through the family of the solicitor to whom he was articled, and whose daughter fell in love with him, a fact of which he was stupidly unaware in his absorption in his ambitious aims. Having recovered from Kitty Burns, though he never forgot her, and having passed through one or two lighter episodes of the same character, each ending in disgust, he held that he had finished with that side of life and that all the passion and emotion in his character was concentrated upon an abstraction he called the People, and personified, now as a suffering angel, now as a chained Titan, now as a blinded, enslaved Samson, but always adored and to be delivered. Golden dreams of happiness and honor, of submerged, suffering millions borne to happy havens and purple islands of the blessed, hovered round him, sleeping and waking, and lifted him above the dull prose and fret of everyday life.

Ethel Bantock, the tamely pretty girl who worshiped him, was sometimes favored with glimpses of this golden dreamland, to his comfort and her great bewilderment and admiration; the atmosphere and family life of this commonplace and uncultured, but clean and wholesome, middle-class home was very good for him. The strain of some deep, unsatisfied want, that was draining his life and reducing him to a mere intellectual machine, relaxed there; the recurrent, restless misery that sent him by unerring instinct to that quiet fireside was lulled again and again, while the restraint and discipline of a well-ordered household, to

which he was warmly welcomed, steadied and solaced him, though he only paid visits to the Bantocks, who had been extremely kind to him, as a duty and a bore. Their strictly middle-class point of view was new to him and not entirely congenial, though he was familiar with that of the lower middle-class and had assimilated it only too well. The male youth of the Bantock circle, though he suffered them almost gladly, were prigs in his eyes, but the meticulous refinement of the ladies, the precision of their conventions and the horror inspired by small infractions of these, had their charm, personified as they were in pretty Ethel, whose carefully hidden adoration and fresh innocence gave him pleasure that he rewarded by a lordly toleration touched with chivalry and the half-contemptuous kindness of an elder brother. Her gentle voice and ways, her carefully correct demeanor, her fresh complexion, tranquil blue eyes and bright hair, above all the pretty flush and smile of her welcome, were as pleasant to him as the dainty silver and crystal table appointments of the Bantocks' mid-Victorian dining-room; and though it never occurred to him to fall in love with a creature so colorless and insignificant, her society and friendship sufficed to keep deeper instincts in abeyance, thus leaving all his fire and enthusiasm for wider interests and intellectual aims, in the golden moments not filled by office routine and dry and savorless legal studies.

Mr. Bantock, a good old-fashioned Liberal, took active part in the local political machinery, of which George soon learned the working, making himself very useful in it. He learned shorthand and typewriting, made special reports for the local Liberal paper, became a contributor to periodicals and published a collection of social sketches of and for the People, always with the capital letter.

Then he took a long farewell of Mr. Bantock and the legal profession, and went to town to deliver mankind and

incidentally make his fortune. There he went through a drab period of obligatory low diet and practical experience of pawnshops, during which he neither saw Hugh Mascott nor gave him any address. He learned what it was to sleep in railway archways and on embankment benches; and once even went to a Night Shelter—an experience that greatly interested him—always cheered by the golden dream and never losing confidence in his star, the success, that he was convinced he could achieve because he would.

Then, at lowest ebb, the tide turned; pence for a brilliant magazine article arrived and things came out of pawn. Restored to the pains of semi-respectability and the pleasures of clean linen, he fell one day out of a public library into the arms of Jim, who condoned his desertion of the law and put him in the way of getting a position as reporter on a daily paper. Hugh was then furnished with his address, and at an early meeting received a spirited and joyous recital of the submerged days, provocative of much laughter to both.

"But why on earth didn't you come to me?" Hugh asked.

George only looked at him, with a little proud smile and lift of the head that Hugh understood. He was there, alive and flourishing by his own hand; he had needed no other to pluck him from the depths that submerged him for a time.

Jim, whose correct designation was Baron Wycherley of Wycherley—though he had begun life as plain James Follet and tried to earn his living by his pen, his profession as barrister having resulted in nothing but debts, small troubles easily effaced by the absorption of a small patrimony on the remnants of which he lived, or, his friends said, kept alive—had in recent years been inconvenienced by sudden wealth beyond his wildest dreams. Four promising and mature lives that stood between him and the barony with accompanying large property, landed and otherwise, having been

swept away by the Boer War, gave him rank and possessions that he did not want and deprived him of friends that he did.

Embarrassed to know what to do with wealth to which, he complained, he was not born, he was persuaded by a friend of the People, whose acquaintance he had made in an East-end University Settlement, to finance a weekly paper of ultra-radical views, with the friend as editor. It was called the *Awakener,* and by Jim's friends christened the *Sponge,* from its property of absorbing his money. One Saturday morning there was no *Awakener* and the People's friend was nowhere discoverable, his private banking account was closed, that of the *Awakener* considerably overdrawn, and staff payments in arrears. So, as the *Awakener* appeared to have awakened nothing but great wrath in unpaid debtors and Jim was informed that the name was a bad seller—an expression that he took as metaphorical for inferior wine—it was set going again as the *Trumpet,* and another friend of the People—lately on the staff of a Conservative daily—found to direct its rousing blasts. On this George Darrell was content to become a regular contributor, though, as far as reaching the public was concerned, his weekly blasts on that instrument might as well have been blown into a disused coal-mine; but he blew them honestly all the same.

About this time there was a meeting in a western suburb to protest against something that was receiving a good deal of journalistic execration and was either to be promoted or abolished, stimulated or crushed, by the British panacea for everything—an Act of Parliament.

Thither, the question under discussion being of a social character and the platform occupied by speakers of eminence and influence, George went, note-book in hand, all eye and ear and penetrating intelligence, when suddenly during a speech by a distinguished member of the Opposition—at the

moment Conservative—he found himself shouting at the top of his strong, clear voice: "That is not true."

At this the speaker, who was quoting an assertion in an article descriptive of social conditions among the poorest classes, stopped and brought his eye-glasses to bear on the interrupter.

"Nothing of the kind was either said or implied," George continued, amidst the usual commotion evoked by unauthorized public speech.

"It would be interesting," the speaker proceeded, quietly dropping his glasses, "to know if our well-informed young friend in the distant benches ever *read* the article (laughter) to which I refer and which is well worthy of attention."

"I wrote it," shouted George, a little surprised at the carrying power of his voice.

"It might then be still more interesting, with your permission, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen," the speaker replied, "to hear from the lips of the accomplished writer himself what the assertion I have cited and have here upon my notes does mean," and, after some formalities of assent, a brief summary of the facts stated and the deductions to be drawn from them was given by the obscure writer of the article, together with the context of the misquoted passage. This was courteously replied to by the first speaker with some apologetic justification of his own misapprehension, and the continuance and conclusion of his own argument. The other big guns went off in due course, resolutions were made and seconded and, at the secret instance of an eminent Conservative, the writer of the illuminating and misquoted article was asked to give further views on the subject upon which he appeared to be so well informed.

This was an epoch in George's life. It introduced him to more than one man eminent in the political world, and it confirmed him in the self-confidence essential to success in

public life. When he stood on the platform and confronted the sea of faces filling the great hall and running like a cornice round the gallery edges, everything seemed to swim and grow indistinct before him. It was a more numerous, more cultured and better informed audience—largely upper middle-class—than he had yet addressed. Ladies were present; some in rich evening wraps, that now and then disclosed the flash of jewels; bright admiring eyes, bright intelligent eyes of women, mingled with cold and critical, keen and appreciative glances of men, were concentrated upon him, as in a blinding sheet of light, that first disconcerted and then stimulated him. Words failed him, thought vanished; he became conscious of the beauty of two majestic beeches pierced with evening sunshine through their shimmering leafage, that stood within view of his grandfather's cottage, conscious of bright autumn flowers in the garden, of the meek, beseeching face of Joe, the donkey, thrust over the fence, and of bees humming about the straw hives in the drowsy warmth. These fading, he grew aware of two soft eyes singled from the crowd, in which all the light in the world seemed to glow, and something shot through him like an arrow, barbed with pain and unutterable joy.

He had something to say and said it well, in a resonant voice vibrating with feeling and simple, picturesque English, unstained by slang; the audience, tired out by a monotony of stale phrase, verbose platitude, and the wearisome procedure of a public meeting, listened with almost affectionate forbearance to the handsome, unknown youth, evidently sprung from the class of which he spoke with such warmth and intimate knowledge. And soon, having stated his facts and pronounced them a stain on humanity, George lost himself in the magnetism of those eloquent young eyes in the crowd, so softly bright with sympathetic response, and gave rein to the passionate indignation stirred by the ardor of his de-

votion to the abstraction he called the People, in a silence that made heart-beats audible.

The freshness of open fields and billowy seas was still on his lips and in his heart; his language was his own, untainted by newspaper jargon or the cant of any clique and unfettered by fear of consequence; he was as idyllic in thought and appearance as the Book of Ruth, and dogmatic with the superbly irrational autocracy of first youth. It must be stopped, he said, as if the assertion ended the matter. Yet these abuses were old, old perhaps as the beginning of Time.

The weak and subtle few, the Jacob, seemed always to have oppressed the strong and simple many, the Esau. But the true king of men was he who brought corn and wine and oil from the earth, and, piercing to its heart, wrested from it treasure of iron and gold and shining gem for the comfort and service of men; the man who wrought with his hands, who fared scantily, lay hard, rose early and rested late, who consumed his strength in weaving rich tissues and fashioning stately palaces at peril of life and limb, that the idle and luxurious, the selfish and vicious, might live and dream at ease and have leisure to plot, like tent-keeping Rebecca and Jacob, against generous, open-hearted, open-air Esau and by subtlety snatch his birthright and blessing. Blind, blind with years and infirmities, like Isaac, were the aged and tottering powers of earth, crafty and cruel, like Rebecca, was Capital that robbed—not, as in Scripture, its offspring, but its progenitor, the great-hearted, mighty-limbed, unsuspecting Esau, who too readily yielded and continues to yield his birthright for the mess of pottage, the miserable wage to meet his immediate bare necessity, that unkings and dishonors him.

But the hour was drawing nigh when the world's toiler, the eldest born—for the contemplative man cannot exist till the man of action has found food and shelter for him—will arise and shake the supplanter's yoke from off his neck. "It is

drawing nigh, it is striking, is even now here; I see it in the uprising and growing supremacy of the great democracies of the world; I see the dawn of a just and equal distribution of the world's wealth and enjoyment; I see the beginning of that perfect brotherhood of man when nation shall no more rise against nation nor man oppress man any more, and all unnecessary suffering shall be at an end forever. To hasten that day's glorious breaking, to accomplish that final good, is the majestic task, the superb aim, of the virile young democracies furnished with the accumulated knowledge, enfranchised by the great discoveries, stimulated by the new desires and aspirations, of the world's latest and greatest age, this actual fullness of time in which we are living."

"Pity to come down to piffle," a man said to the owner of the eyes that had so stirred the speaker. "He put the case of the sweated so well. Evidently self-taught, which means that he had a fool for master and only knows things in spasms. But young—very young."

"And he writes in Jim's *Trumpet*," another man whispered from the row behind.

George was severely cross-questioned about his facts on the platform, and in private when the meeting broke up, and much hand-shaken, in a patronage mixed with genuine interest and appreciation, by the great guns, whom he saw as not seeing, being entirely preoccupied by the young and pensive face suddenly and mysteriously detached from the sea of unknown faces, only to be submerged again soon and perhaps for ever. He hardly knew the color of the soft eyes and shining hair, but the mouth, firmly modeled yet sweet, warm and deep rose-red, and its way of breaking into a little soft smile or childlike droop of sadness, was vividly present all the time he was telling those big guns dreary facts about workshops and wages; about squalid attics, bare and fireless, where starving women never ceased to ply their

weary fingers from early morning till late night, and pallid, hunger-stricken men, their lungs choked with floating hairs, worked continually on rich and delicate furs in a close atmosphere fetid with human breath.

Over the shoulders and between the arms of those solid and important men he looked, trying to follow the movements of a slight figure threading its way slowly and with enforced pauses to the far end of the hall. With anguish he saw it vanish through the double doors before he could get free of these important people, whose acquaintance meant so much, not to him only, but to the Cause, and then, slipping through a near exit, he dashed round to the principal entrance to watch and wait and eagerly scan every female face passing through and across the thronged vestibule, till all were gone and attendants impatiently hurrying to and fro, shutting doors and extinguishing lights.

All in vain; she had vanished into the void chaos of human millions, whence she had for one bright moment flashed. But she must come again; not all the shifting, crossing currents of the million-peopled town could carry her away and hide her. Having once met so closely they must meet again. Nothing could go on without her. "Where have we met before?" he wondered, ignorant even of her name. But she knew his.

CHAPTER VI

THE meeting that was to have such strong influence upon George Darrell's life took place a long time after Hugh Mascott's melancholy coming-of-age at Deerham and subsequent misadventure in love-making in the Riviera, where he completed his recovery from wounds and sickness. In the meantime he had taken his degree at Oxford and been called to the Bar, and was now studying life from the point of view of private secretary to an ex-Cabinet minister. Social questions interested him no less perhaps than George, and much more than they interested Jim. The latter possessed a zeal without knowledge for the well-being of those less burdened with world's wealth than himself, and would have expressed it in wild and indiscriminate alms-giving, beggaring himself and reducing hordes of luxurious and predatory idlers and people otherwise harmless to perpetual pauperism, had he not been forcibly restrained by his friends —especially by his sister. Since her widowhood she had lived with him as much as such an erratic and unconventional person could be lived with, and supervised all his ways and works as much as a fairly strong will and unusually powerful family affection prompted—and that was not little.

She guided his aimless steps of benevolence into ordered ways of societies and narrow paths of committees, inquiries, and reports; sometimes she even succeeded in leading him up to chill and comfortless heights of platforms, the drab monotony of which his fitful and unconventional flights of eloquence considerably enlivened. She edited his occasional contributions to his own paper, a bitter and thankless task,

compared to which penal servitude is a pleasant pastime—so she said. She sorted his miscellaneous guests, as in days of early poverty she had been accustomed to tidy his wardrobe, separating boots from collars and protecting evening shirts and ties from the jostling oppression of leather belts, putties, and heavy tweed suits.

Jim knew that her price was above rubies, though he never said so. He knew too that her guidance and discipline were absolutely necessary to his happiness and comfort, though he often rebelled against them, as we all do against wholesome and beneficent restraint—not always so much from the frailty of our nature as from a secret desire to test the strength of the bonds we know to be needful to our well-being. He especially valued her as the treasurer and dispenser of his charities, regarding her as a domestic chancellor of the exchequer and relying entirely upon her to regulate and balance revenue and expenditure. As Jim's generosity and the objects he desired to finance grew with years, while his revenues tended rather to diminish than increase, and poor Mrs. Ashberry found it no child's work to keep order and proportion in these outgoings and the correspondence and bookkeeping they involved, she had recourse to young, and often attractive, lady secretaries, who invariably fell in love with or were made love to by the first youth they met, and had to be either discharged or married just as they were beginning to get into the swing of the work.

"What, again?" Sylvia Mostyn asked, arriving in response to a written cry of distress for a visit of some weeks at their house in Piccadilly, as she had so often done before, not so much to enjoy the amenities of a season in town as to share with Margaret Ashberry the duties of the most recently married secretary, sadly tangled and neglected as they had been during the agitations and preoccupations incidental to falling in love and becoming engaged.

"What can you expect," Jim observed after the recital of a tale of woe, "if you exploit human youth and beauty, and chain beating hearts and limbs throbbing with joy of life to the 'drab mechanic exercise' of desk and pen?"

"Well, I expect a little common sense and respect for duty, my good Jim," his sister replied, with the little hopeless laugh his Job's comforting often produced; "the drab mechanic exercise is just what drives one wild." She had no objection, she explained, to the youthful weaknesses of love-making and marrying in themselves; what she carped at was the idiocy, the absolute annihilation of every moral and mental faculty, produced in present-day female youth, by this surge of instinct, this sudden tide of dual egotism they call love. "Every slum in London might be decimated by phthisis and diphtheria, every infant in the metropolis poisoned by improper food, rather than one absurd letter or ridiculous lovers' meeting should be missed; better that the most important measure ever placed before any legislative assembly should miscarry in its passage through the House than that some petty misunderstanding between two foolish and obscure young donkeys should be allowed to arise."

"Exquisite folly, divine instinct," murmured Jim, who could never find any flaw or defect in the young and attractive of the frailer sex—he would as soon have thought of accusing a handful of honeysuckles of sedition—and always took care that his sister never engaged any but the young and attractive. That fact this astute lady had never observed—so subtle was the guile with which he placed insuperable obstacles in the way of engaging young people with drab complexions, bad figures, beaky noses, pince-nez, or other physical defects—till the younger and more guileful Sylvia pointed it out to her.

"I really am ashamed," Mrs. Ashberry said to her on this occasion; "it seems as if you were the permanent secretary

and all these young idiots mere understudies or *locum tenens,* we send for you so often."

"Why should you not send for me? I am only too glad to come; it is an object in life. And I'm so interested in these things," Sylvia said a little sadly; for she was very weary of going to and fro in the vain pretence of living under her father's roof and trying to keep the peace in the uncongenial home she was seldom allowed to visit.

"Well, why not?" the brother and sister gladly echoed with sudden and mutual inspiration. Thus from that date Sylvia found a home and an object in life, and devoted herself with great ardor to the origination and furtherance of many excellent undertakings, so that Margaret Ashberry's secretarial troubles were ended, and she was supplied with a most able lieutenant and counselor both in the personal guidance of Jim and the direction of his charities and social enterprises.

It was Sylvia who suggested and insisted upon a thorough investigation of the affairs of the *Trumpet* and opened Jim's eyes to certain defects, not only in the direction of the paper but also into the conduct and character of its editor. In explanation of the fact that he was writing in Conservative papers while editing the *Trumpet,* he had confided to her his private views of politics as a mere game of intellect, like chess, not to be taken seriously with the grave importance due only to athletic sport—except so far as the main chance was concerned in it—and had also been so ill-advised and ill-mannered as to turn Lord Wycherley and his views into ridicule in her hearing.

Then it was sadly decreed that the *Trumpet* should go the way of the *Awakener* and its affairs be wound up before further and complete depletion of the exchequer.

"I always thought money was a nuisance," Jim said on taking this decision; "now I know it."

"Cheer up, Jim dear," Sylvia comforted; "it won't be a nuisance to you much longer at this rate. But you might find going through the Bankruptcy Court a still greater bore."

"You are a good girl, Sylvia," he replied; "and if you were only a boy I'd turn the whole blessed thing over to you and live on a pound a week in a cottage—or on the road."

"I wish to Heaven he would," General Mostyn commented on this, repeated by Sylvia as an amusing and characteristic utterance of Jim's, though he was half-jealous of the poet, and his being able to do for his child what he had put it out of his power to do himself.

"But unfortunately I don't know how to edit," she said; "and the secretary business exhausts all my little power. I'm not at all sure I could even go through that, if it were not for the receptions and conversaziones, which pull me together again."

Her father thought she could do anything—except manage Mrs. Mostyn and live happily with her daughters—and mused fondly upon the brilliant part she played in those social functions at the house in Piccadilly, of which she was the life, and regretfully thought how such brilliance would have irradiated his own house but for the incompatibility of the lady of his mistaken choice. And Hugh Mascott, who sometimes leaned against door-posts at these functions and took part with her in the business of philanthropic and charitable enterprises, rated her capabilities quite as highly as her father did.

"There must be some honest men about somewhere," Jim sighed in desperation, after taking the serious resolution to relieve Mr. Morgan of his editorial duties.

"Yes, dear; but not of your way of thinking," his sister returned with a refreshing candor that impressed even the unobservant poet, who murmured meekly that however un-

conventional his views might be they were at least not criminal.

"Why not advertise?" Mrs. Ashberry said in her firm, brisk way.

"For an honest man, Margaret? Not a bad idea, really."

"There's Hugh's friend," Sylvia suggested absently, looking out of the window. "Too young, perhaps?"

"Young Darrell? Great Scott! so there is. Clever chap, but no weight, no experience; honest, if you like—honest as the day. But it takes more than honesty to conduct papers properly. I'm honest myself, whatever my sister may insinuate, but I couldn't edit so much as a girls' school magazine."

"The article quoted by Mr. Barrington at the meeting was in the *Trumpet,* you remember," Mrs. Ashberry said. "It made a great stir and sent the circulation up——"

"Fifty copies," Lord Wycherley commented mournfully.

"A series of such articles might, with a capable editor——"

"And honest; there's the rub, Madge."

"And honest? Yes, Jim; and with a little patience and advertising and good luck and an excellent staff and generous financing—it might, who knows but it might," mused Mrs. Ashberry.

"On the other hand, Madge, it mightn't."

"Everybody was impressed by Mr. Darrell that night. A man of quite exceptional ability," Sylvia said; "practical as well as brilliant. Such enthusiasm, such generous warmth of feeling for the unfortunate and oppressed."

"Generous feelings and enthusiasm alone can't run papers, my dear child. Journalists, like cooks and poets, are born and not made. No, *delenda est.* Put up the shutters,"—a deep sigh—"and pay the bills"—in a bass of profoundest melancholy.

"Pity, too," Mrs. Ashberry mused, tapping with her pencil

on the desk before her, as if beating the *Trumpet's* funeral march. "It supplied a felt want——"

"Of which unluckily nobody appeared to be conscious," said Jim.

"With a good editor and a better circulation——" she continued.

"Ah! that's the difficulty."

"It might be a success," she persisted. "The *Trumpet* would become a household word——"

"Never," said Sylvia, busy making pen-and-ink sketches on an odd sheet of paper at her writing-table. "Nothing household, nothing attractive to the powers that be in households in such a title. Call it the *Home Guardian*—and put in fashions and Hints to Housewives——"

"And betting tips," Mrs. Ashberry eagerly chimed in; "a children's page——"

"The 'Kiddies' Corner'—with illustrations," added Sylvia, carefully finishing the nose of the Prime Minister of the hour; "very full and detailed murder cases, with portraits of the accused at various stages of his career: as an infant in a perambulator—as Sunday school teacher with a smile to order—as winner of sports cups—as bridegroom elect with young lady on arm—as champion gramophone operator——"

"Yes, yes, with an exciting serial full of explosive stops and dashes: humble virtue and haughty vice—high-placed villain—virtuous butcher's boy—machinations defeated by lowly, but romantic, milkman—a railway accident—a couple of suicides—a house on fire—heroic rescue and a murder or two. Capital, Sylvia. Excellent idea, my dear."

"What? You would degrade the organ of a great and noble cause to popularity?" cried Jim with grieved reproach.

"Well, we must stoop if we want to conquer," Sylvia said, supplying the Chancellor of the Exchequer with an elaborate Cheshire cat grin.

"Besides, Jim dear, our great aim is to touch the heart of the People," his sister reminded him.

"To fine issues—not to fine cookery, Margaret. The People's mind is to be lifted out of the slough of cooking and baking and serving and hewing of wood and drawing water, in which it has so long been sinking to its chin; lifted on to the firm ground of reason and self-respect, to the pure air of thought and pleasurable life. Hands 'that the rod of empire might have swayed' are no longer to be stiffened and distorted by the plow, the loom, the hammer, and the hayfork. Hearts 'pregnant with celestial fire' are no more to be set beating by monotonous toil, or to pine in the dreariness of the daily round or the common task."

"But then who is to do the cooking and the plowing and the common tasking, Jim dear?"

"My dear child, the fit, of course. What we want is to get *at* the People first," replied the poet, rising with knitted brows and pacing the room, "and for this we want—h'm! we want——"

"A man *of* the People?" Sylvia suggested, still intent on her sketching; "Hugh's friend, for instance. If only he were not so young. But who was saying that this new age is to be the era of young men, as the nineteenth century was the age of grand old ones? *They* seem to have made a nice mess of it, by all accounts."

The poet admitted that a little youth came handy, even in the conduct of a paper. Mrs. Ashberry ironically added beauty and editorial qualifications and was suggesting Sylvia, as combining both with wisdom beyond her years, when a servant came in to announce someone to see Lord Wycherley on business, a word that extracted a faint groan from his lordship, till having adjusted his glasses and looked at the card brought him, his face brightened.

"George Darrell," he said, telling the man to show him in.

"Now, Madge, here is a noble opportunity for you to weigh the poor young chap in your balance and sift out his defects and weaknesses and cut him into little pieces and serve him on toast afterwards in your merciless way."

CHAPTER VII

GEORGE DARRELL, whose personal acquaintance with the *Trumpet's* dethroned editor was slight but convincing, sometimes wondered if Lord Wycherley had any idea as to what manner of man he had entrusted what to his own mind was the grave responsibility of conducting even the most insignificant newspaper. He had not then discovered that Jim had no ideas to speak of but was composed entirely of impulses, upon which he acted under the impression that they were principles.

The *Trumpet* was Jim's organ—indifferently termed by his friends the mouth-organ or the penny trumpet—therefore the People's. George still retained his youthful faith in the Press as a semi-divine power, shaking thrones and dominations and bringing trembling upon kings and mighty ones; he still believed in the voice of the People—though he was not yet quite sure what he meant by that nebulous abstraction—as divine and to be blindly and unflinchingly hearkened to and obeyed. The editor of a People's organ was therefore a high priest and interpreter of the Delphic oracle, sacrosanct, and not lightly to be chosen. He was less surprised than discomposed to learn that the *Trumpet,* on which he had begun to sound vigorous and stirring blasts of his own, was to be blown no more, and continually racked his brains to discover some means not only to prolong its existence but to bring it into more tuneful and powerful activity.

His vivid experience at the meeting when he had spoken so successfully had opened fresh springs of life and energy in him; it had shown him his power. He had held the charmed

attention of a cultivated and critical audience, played on their feelings, as upon a musical instrument, and felt the responsive throb of their hearts in his own. A man who can do this can do almost anything in the political world, where the persuasion of speech has to be used on unlettered multitudes, and where political measures have to be urged vocally, no longer on comparatively intelligent people in Parliament, but upon massed meetings in public halls and open-air spaces, crowded with all sorts and conditions of men—mostly ignorant and untrained sorts easily swayed and carried away by the moment's sudden contagious passion, incapable of thought and quickly convinced by skillful phrase and distorted reasoning. The People, in spite of their divinity, have to be cajoled and guided, he discovered—like certain South Italian saints, who have not only to be persuaded but coerced and scolded, even spit upon at times, when they turn a deaf ear to their worshippers' imperious demands. There are two ways of leading men and no third, each way being backed by strong will and personal magnetism; the way of deeds and the way of words. Napoleon led by both; but he led armies. George had words; but his business was to lead mobs.

He went home on that eventful night in chariots of cloud and rose, softly floating, drawn by invisible steeds of hope and exquisite dream. He lay wide-eyed, hearing the hours strike till dawn, the face that had moved him always before his eyes. Latent, long-repressed emotions, starved till now upon vague and unsatisfying abstractions, had something human and alive with fresh youth to feed upon; the old, enthusiastic passion for the People was quickened to new life by the great emotional stir evoked by the spirit that had looked from softly shining eyes in that unknown young face and owned his power. He had touched *her;* he could touch the People and the world.

Next day and the next in every street, in every crowd,

the face was diligently but vainly sought; it flitted smiling through his dreams and hovered over him, brightening his work, by day. Once he thought, with a sudden cold shiver, he might never find her again in the flesh; she might never be more than a life-long, illusive ideal. For who and what was she? Only a face with a soul in it; with neither name nor dwelling-place. Against this chilling fear youth and warm blood soon revolted. The world might be wide, but never wide enough to hold them apart. What was space or time to a passionate desire that had the strength of eternity in it?

And once he saw her. And she saw him, with a flash of recognition quickly quenched. She was descending, not from roseate clouds, wafted by soft and balmy breezes, but escorted by a gray-bearded commissionaire, from the Army and Navy Stores. Passing on the other side of the street, he slackened his pace to see her flit down the steps and vanish in a hansom. Springing into another, he told the driver to follow and keep her in sight. But things came between, an omnibus blocked the enchanted hansom from view; there was a cross-road and a turning and the vision was swallowed up in the crowd and lost.

Another time he was in a hansom threading the mazes of the Strand traffic as swiftly as the silver spur, a willing driver, and a quick trotter could, and looking straight before him, with knitted brows, crossed arms, and thoughts full of the appointment the fast trotter might not enable him to keep. Suddenly the face appeared among hurrying figures on the crowded pavement, like a flower in a mass of leaves, and once more there was the flash of meeting eyes and the world made new and beautiful again, *"wie am ersten Tag."*

That appointment was never kept. By the time the hansome, mixed up in the tide of traffic, was stopped, the driver overpaid and a frantic rush over the thronged pavement at-

tempted by the eager pursuer, the figure pursued had vanished without the ghost of a clew. She was lost and the world grown ugly and old again. So it would always be, he thought, when weeks passed and dejection fell upon him. All that long-starved, long-repressed, and urgent need, accumulated at growing interest from solitary childhood, newly wakened and now stirred to intolerable pain of craving, would never be satisfied. Even the People could not still that want; realized ambition would but intensify the solitude and longing.

The Press Gallery had now become a dreary cage; the intricate points and dots on the pad before him a dizzy monotony of nothingness. He asked himself how long his youth and talent and power of enjoyment was to be atrophied in this house of bondage, without his even becoming one of the crowd on the benches below where, disregarding all that droning verbiage and petty platitude, he might bring some life and stir into the deadening maze of procedure. All that petty detail of Board of Trade proceedings, why drone and mumble it over in the ear of a thinned and thinning chamber, sparsely peopled by wearied officials and a remnant of members reading, chatting, scribbling notes, drowsing, or frankly slumbering upon empty benches? Mere treadmill work, wasting the nation's time and impeding the august duties of the imperial senate—an abuse to be swept away one day, the day of George Darrell. This journalistic business was only the apprenticeship to an apprenticeship, after all; time was passing, youth waning and nothing done. Some other way must be found, a way that left some leisure to live in; this perpetual grind was not life, but the chained oar of a galley-slave. And the world so beautiful and the power of enjoyment so intense.

"So, having chucked the law, you want to chuck journalism?" Hugh said, on one of those rare and festal evenings

when they dined together. "You are not your own man to-night, Darrell, a cup too low. Better stick this out. Don't fizzle out like a wet rocket. Your first wrong turning was missing the scholarship——"

"My *first?*" He flushed so hotly that Hugh would have liked to withdraw his words. "You think I've no staying power, and am bound to fizzle out? No; but I'm not going to fossilize in the first hole I chance to have tumbled into and die a dreary old middle-class fogey—much respected and clean forgot."

"Not you. But dying-time's a long way off. So you haven't found the hole you want yet?"

"No hole for me. Men who rise must climb. It's a ladder I want."

"It's play you want, my dear old chap. Your life is so beastly dull. What's become of that nice little girl you used to sing with? Bantock's daughter, wasn't it?"

"Little girls can be all that they ought to be—all that is delightful—and their talk as dull as ditch-water. But they never come in my way now."

"No cousins and no sisters? Poor chap. Try this Château Yquem, George. It's the wine Solomon was thinking of 'that goeth down sweetly,' old, dry and mellow. It must have been very turbid and frothy in its youth, with bad headaches instead of sweet dreams in it." ["Poor chap, he's in love," he thought, "with some carroty-haired barmaid, very likely."] "Here's to your climbing and both our sweet dreams, George. And may we be as mellow as this wine in our old age—when you've done prime ministering and I'm fossilized and clean forgot in my hole. Come on, let's go somewhere. You like opera. *Samson et Delilah* is on to-night."

But George was tired of dreams and sick for reality. Hugh was right, he needed play. The dream-face must go to

the limbo of forgetfulness and the journalism be pursued to its highest summit. In the meantime, the *Trumpet,* so handy to play upon, must not be lost.

With these thoughts he reached the house in Piccadilly and after a little waiting was asked to walk up the deep-carpeted, shallow stairs, and shown into a room he had never been in before, Jim's own den having been his destination on the few former visits made to his patron's private address.

He never forgot that room, known to the inmates as the study. It was Mrs. Ashberry's special stronghold, in which most of her business was transacted and her business visitors were received. It was a large room, looking towards the green domes of the Park, lined with book-cases; there was more than one fully appointed writing-table, with piles of papers, pamphlets and reference books lying about in a sort of ordered disorder; there was also a telephone receiver, a typewriting machine, and here and there a bust, a statuette, and, where a space between shelves permitted, a few fine proof engravings.

A bowl of roses here and a glass of violets there, with a suspicion of lavender and lemon verbena, filled the air with a light and stimulating enchantment. The engravings and statuettes, springy lounging-chairs covered with fresh chintz in pleasant corners and a deep Chesterfield near the fire-place, further took away from the business look of the room, to which a carved ceiling, painted with garlands and flying Cupids in the Italian style, added another grace. A soft flood of afternoon sunshine, slanting through a window which framed Sylvia's light figure at a writing-table and kindled bright reflections in her hair, bringing out the color of her dress and burning on gold-lettered books on the shelves, completed the charm of the cheerful yet studious apartment.

As he crossed the threshold Sylvia looked up straight into his startled, dilating eyes. Again there was that momentary

flash, as of mingling thought in the mutual glance; then her eyes fell on the paper beneath her pen. A sudden crimson flooded her face, while the firm color ebbed from his, leaving it dead white, and joy of life fell upon him and made his heart stand still for a moment.

Then he became aware of another and more stately female presence, whose kind and gracious look of welcome and appreciation was bent upon him, as he came in, broad-shouldered, firmly knit, with his usual bold and level glance like a soldier's, and assured air of careless power; though the unconventional Jim often forgot such minor obligations, he at once presented George to his sister, whose cordial reception would have put the shyest young man at ease, and at once captivated this confident and self-possessed youth. She was glad of this opportunity of personal acquaintance, remembered seeing him a few weeks since at the meeting in aid of a society of which she was on the committee, when he had interested them so deeply and made that new and surprising application of the story of Jacob and Esau.

"And do we understand that you are to shake the yoke from Esau's neck?" she asked.

"Certainly I am going to help, and so is Lord Wycherley," he replied, not resenting the banter. "A large order and nobody knows when the goods will be delivered, but delivered they'll be, all right."

"You've come on some beastly business, Darrell?" his lordship asked.

"Yes. About the *Trumpet*."

"Too late. Dead and buried, we were just chanting its dirge. We, at least Miss Mostyn," ["Ah! the secretary," George thought, observing shorthand notes before her, as he turned with a slight bow in the direction of Jim's waved hand] "is composing its epitaph."

"Oh! not dead, surely not; I came to beg its life. The

Trumpet can't be dead. Let us dig it up and try artificial respiration. Run it on cheaper lines. Indeed, my lord, the expenses were too large and the staff was too well paid, especially the editor, and there was no management. And the paper was never properly advertised—we want a few blatant posters a couple of yards high——"

"Aye, and a good many other things, amongst them an honest editor," sighed Jim.

"Certainly. You don't want a sweep with no convictions of his own and a pen to be hired for anybody's. You want a business manager and popular things"—Sylvia looked up with a quick smile at Mrs. Ashberry, and Jim groaned with a gesture of despair—"lots of things. But may I go on? Have you time to listen now? Your sister——"

"Oh, don't mind me, Mr. Darrell. I want to hear all about it."

"Well, then, if you want to get at the working-man, you must get at the missus first"—Sylvia sent another quick smile and glance to Mrs. Ashberry—"and be a little less—academical, is not that the word?"

"Like this," said Mrs. Ashberry, taking Sylvia's rapidly jotted notes—Hints to Housewives, The Kiddies' Corner, etc.—and handing them to him.

"Like that," he approved; "that'll make things hum. And shove in a bit of fashion—gowns and fal-lals—that fetches the women, more even than advice about teething babies. *I* do the advice to mothers on that little *Home Tattle* rag as easy as pat, copy it out of *Counsels to Young Mothers,* and they want me to do the fashions as well, but I feel that that's too serious for an unskilled laborer like me. Some lady should do that." He hesitated, with a glance at the writing-table in the window and another at the tragic figure of Jim, who was distractedly pacing the room and tearing his hair.

"You would degrade me, degrade a sacred cause, to Kiddies' Corners?" cried Jim tragically.

"Neither you nor the cause. And I'm ready to serve tables for that," George said, smiling gently into Jim's furious face, which, Mrs. Ashberry observed with satisfaction, he thoroughly understood. "But the paper, once well launched, must support itself, and your lordship must be saved from financial disaster. And then, *then* it shall spread its plumes and soar aloft."

"But where," asked Jim, with sudden composure, "where is the honest editor?"

"Why, here," replied George coolly, tapping his chest. "I know," he added, flushing, "that it's thundering cheek. But I am sure I could do it. I know my way about a newspaper office fairly well by this time."

"I believe you could," returned Jim with sudden tranquillity.

"And for less than a living wage. It would only take a part of my time and I'd do it for love, and go to prison for it on occasion. Suppose we call it the *Sunday Visitor,* as it's published on Saturday?"

"Well, why not? or *L'Ami du Peuple,* the *People's Friend?*"

"The *Household Friend* had been suggested," Sylvia said.

It was the first time her voice had been heard and it went through George like a silver arrow, filling his veins with the elixir of life and his heart with the music of the spheres.

"A delightful title," he said with a little quiver; "but 'Sunday' would fetch the people we want more. True, there was *Household Words,* but I think that had to be changed for *Once a Week. Sunday* makes it weekly and *Visitor* gives the family quality without too much insistence."

"The *family* quality!" groaned Jim, again precipitated to the depths. "My dear lad—what have *we* to do with fami-

lies? The *Trumpet* was to sound the clarion in the People's ears and rally them to the reconstruction of society on right principles, not to amuse idle nursemaids neglecting perambulators in the public parks."

George laughed his jovial, deep-chested laugh. "Don't let us despise the nursemaids, the future mothers and wives of the People. They are at least half the People—and the better half, too," he said. "The People can't afford two papers and the missus must have hers. She'll devour your poems, if you'll make them sentimental enough, and gloat over the fashions and lap up the advice to young mothers like a kitten. These things will be the jam, the powder will be the men's part—social and political principles brought to bear upon topics of the day."

"Labor party politics," murmured Jim resignedly.

"Didn't we understand you were to be a free lance? So I took your meaning."

"Yet you would have me wallow in the slough of popularity?"

"But the People has no politics. It only wants to be amused and send men to parliament to see fair for it and get higher wages and less work."

"Panem et circenses?" thundered Jim, as furious as his sister was amused; *"you* to echo that tragic Tory slander?"

"Based on truth, unluckily. But we are out to cure the ignorance and apathy that gave rise to it."

So the battle for the *Trumpet's* life raged, victory inclining now to this side and now to that, but resting finally with George, who was all the time rapt to the seventh heaven in flaming chariots of confident joy and too deeply convinced that everything he thought or wished was mysteriously echoed in the heart of the graceful figure silent in the window, to have the smallest doubt of having and doing

everything he put his mind to. So he left the house potential editor. organizer and temporary manager of a paper that promised to give him free speech and almost unlimited power in shaping the minds of millions and at the same time brought him face to face with the most vivid dream of his youth.

"Remember, Jim," Mrs. Ashberry said, when the door had closed and the strong figure and bright face vanished, "you are committed to nothing. Sylvia, I hope you have taken notes of this sitting; if not, pray do. This young man is capable and masterful, and his confidence in his own power is probably just. But, Jim, you must solidly and consistently refuse to incur any more expense till the *Trumpet's* affairs are finally and absolutely wound up."

"Mr. Darrell undertook that," Sylvia said; "here is my note. He is to make an estimate of necessary outlay for the first twelve months and keep within it. That sum, my poor Jim, whatever it may be, you are probably prepared to take a final farewell of."

"My dear child, I am prepared for anything but the further discussion of sordid matters such as furnish my sister with persistent and unholy joy. May the day dawn, as it surely must at last, when the mention of the foul word, money, will call a blush to the most brazen cheek. Doesn't anybody want some tea? There used to be a pleasant custom of tea-drinking somewhere in this house."

Amongst those who sometimes, though at rare intervals, found time to drop in and join in this custom was Hugh Mascott. Hardly had George Darrell's firm step merged in the general procession streaming by in one direction, when a hansom dropped Hugh at the door from another. He came gladly in, a welcome and intimate guest, with the same fire in his heart and the same glamour in his eyes as George. He had never forgotten the warm winter sunset in the Riviera,

or the emotion stirred in the moonlit cypress avenue, but he had never spoken of it.

While he waited on the steps for the door to open, the sudden warmth and stir in his heart seemed to him to come not from any anticipated renewal of those romantic memories, but from the first fresh feeling of spring in the early March sunshine and the magic the budded boughs were bursting to disclose. He had neither grieved over that foiled romance nor accused the cruelty of fate in frustrating his heart's desire; he had hardly ever given a thought to what took place that evening in the cypress avenue. But it was always there, silent and coloring every act and feeling. Nor did Sylvia ever give a thought to that sunset hour, though she thought much of Hugh and welcomed him today with a smile that turned the tea she poured for him to nectar.

"Come about the Settlement?" she echoed. "And we were just hoping that for once you might have come about *us* and our poor little affairs. One sometimes tires of Settlements and Societies, of what Jim calls the drab monotony of unremunerative toil; don't we, Margaret?"

"It's not the unremunerativeness, it's the lavish expenditure I quarrel with just now——"

"My sister," Jim interrupted with austere dignity, "is suffering from one of her periodic attacks of plutomania. It is only just to add that Sylvia began misquoting me with an odious and unnecessary adjective."

"The truth is, Hugh, we've been wallowing in figures all the afternoon and some of them have stuck to us, so *pax,* dear Jim, Sylvia couldn't help her adjective. And just as we were chained to the rock of failure and about to be devoured by the monster of the *Trumpet's*—h'm, liabilities—I think I might say that, Jim—in comes a splendid young Perseus, wings and sword and all, to deliver us."

"He's a capable chap, that young Darrell," Jim said musingly.

"Darrell? George?" cried Hugh. "So you've made his acquaintance at last?" looking at Sylvia. "Well, now, isn't he just——"

"—Splendid," Mrs. Ashberry finished. "We heard him, you know, in the hall that night, when he made his queer allegorical application of Jacob's stolen blessing. I think I liked him best then. His confidence there against all those bigwigs was not without the dignity of pathos. Here it was a little too pronounced——"

"But rather in the cause than in himself, didn't you think?" Sylvia asked.

"It would be the cause, of course," Hugh said, "it invariably is with him. How well you understand people, Sylvia."

"Well, for a village boy, bred in a cottage and reared by a working tailor, he certainly is wonderful," Mrs. Ashberry conceded. "The taint of the self-made man is scarcely perceptible. He might almost pass for a—an average middle-class youth—as far as breeding goes. Of course there is nothing ordinary or even conventional in him. There's a country accent, hearty and convincing, and a sort of colonial free and easiness——"

"One of nature's gentlemen, in short," said Hugh dogmatically, scenting depreciation and patronage.

"They're all gentlemen—by nature," said Jim, who was in his reddest revolutionary mood; "vulgarized and degraded by the training and conventions of a vilely constituted social system, but gentlemen all in their cradles, all free and all equal."

"Very true, Jim. They all squall in the same tune, and kick and insist upon being attended to at inconvenient hours with just the same lordly disregard of everyone but them-

selves. No dropping of *h*'s, no putting in of *r*'s then. Cradle manners are just the same in palace and hovel. I *know,* for I was once privileged to hold a king's son in these arms."

"Education is the ruin of us *all,*" sighed Jim in apparent regret at having lost his own cradle manners; "but," he added, his blood suddenly asserting itself in a manner that often disconcerted his friends, "you can always tell a man who has risen—and his descendants too for generations. The strain will out somewhere."

Hugh and Sylvia smiled into each other's eyes, but their lips were set in gravity while Mrs. Ashberry's eyes sparkled with pleasure.

"Isn't Jim a darling?" she murmured in a solemn aside to Hugh.

"And how about the *Trumpet?*" Hugh asked.

"Oh, it's like Sir Roland's ivory horn—blown to bits," Jim said; "but young Darrell is to turn the bits into a sort of family sewing-machine and cottage concertina in one, without party bias; and the principles are to be sneaked into recipes for jam and remedies for colic and teething. He says we must degrade ourselves to popularity if we are to touch the People."

"George, George Darrell, said that of his darling People? Save us from our friends."

"But only of the wives," Sylvia hastily corrected.

"The wives are not the People to George? Sad want of gallantry."

"Not at all," she defended. "He says the wives are the better half. The missus is head man and won't take papers she can't read. But once the paper gets a circulation we are going to soar."

"We? What, are you sub-editor, Sylvia? This is news and no mistake. This will set George on his feet; a paper to blow off the steam in was what he always sighed for.

Well, Jim, you and he are in for a nice thing, undermining the foundations of society by the way of back kitchens, corrupting the faith and principles of the British workman through the wife of his bosom, insinuating sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion through the sanctity of the poor man's hearth."

"Well, that's a pretty way of speaking of your friend," Sylvia said.

"My friend the enemy. When it comes to social principles and politics, Darrell and I are sworn foes and know how to respect each other."

"And how about faith, Hugh, agnostic, atheist, or only don't care?" Mrs. Ashberry asked; "Jim, dear, we must not rob the People of their one jewel, their faith."

"Darrell is naturally a political Nonconformist and of course wants to disestablish us," Hugh replied, "but he is by no means without religion. Hervey says he is a born mystic—that's why he was carried away at one time by the Salvation Army—Mother thinks he will end Catholic. Bred without any solid religious foundation or landmark by that cracked old grandfather, and with his mental power and imagination and absolute goodness of heart and cleanness of mind, he's bound to pass through many a phase before he finds anchorage. His present phase is, according to my father—there is no God but the People and Darrell is his Prophet; the pater is a trifle severe, else the saying is just."

"Poor boy!" Sylvia sighed; and Hugh saw something in the far-away gaze of the golden-brown eyes hazed with excess of light that gave him a sharp pang. "It is a beautiful enthusiasm," she added, breaking into the smile that always came to him like a benediction. She was still sitting, as when George was there, framed in a window with the shining silver of a tea-table instead of a paper-littered desk before her, the pure outline of her head and shoulders traced

on a background of molten gold afterglow. The chill of spring dusk made the wood fire throwing little dancing flames upon silver and china a welcome homelike warmth; it glowed in the waves of Sylvia's hair and deepened the soft rose of her cheek while the live gold background of the sky crowned her with a faint aureole as in old Italian paintings.

The ex-Minister's secretary had had a hard day and a harder night was before him; the magic of the restful hour lulled him to a happy calm. He was no poet, neither was he given to introspection, but the music of the spheres sang in his heart, though if asked to put the hour's enchantment into speech he would probably have found but one word, "ripping," for it.

"If beauty were everything," he began—and felt that the beauty of the aureoled face on the background of burning gold was all that made life worth living. She might be unreasonable but he would not have had her otherwise, nor should there be a shadow of difference in the voice, the smile, the deep, thoughtful gaze of clear brown eyes or the graceful outlines of the inclined figure, with elbows resting on the table and hands clasped above it in a listening, absorbed, almost dreamy attitude. Yet, when she moved and laughed under a fresh impulse, he liked her even better. George had seen her there but an hour since—he wondered how she had impressed him; Hugh knew him to be sensitive to beauty and spiritual charm and quick to respond to the appeal of sex. Yet he was far from imagining the possibility of the impression made upon George by the simple-hearted young woman in the window, who had forgotten that Hugh had ever been in love with her, and had not dreamed of inspiring any personal feeling in the young man whose talent and friendship with Hugh gave him a romantic charm and interest.

"Enthusiasm is all very fine," Mrs. Ashberry said; "and beauty is well enough when it's not in young housemaids;

but I'm a born Martha and look on the practical side of things which these geniuses with their noses in the air can never see. My dear Jim, instead of glowering at me as if I were a dentist coming up with his hand behind his back, do, for goodness' sake, hand the muffins and think of your sins. Yet it struck me, Hugh, that your village genius is not one of the hopeless and helpless sort who never come down from the clouds."

"Not he. He has his practical and business side; he goes through the world with his eyes wide open."

"He seemed fairly keen on the advertisements—now, Jim, no groans; you know he said they should be severely sifted —but there are to be no betting tips, no Captain Coes, nothing shady or catch-penny. And now, my dear boy, what about yourself? Here we have been boring you to death with our schemes and failures. We've not even said if we can help in your social evening. Jim will recite something, no doubt, but I'm afraid I'm booked for that night. I might drop in later when I've finished off my 'Young Servants.' Have we anything else, Sylvia?"

"Nothing for that night."

"Then you must polish your 'Young Servants' off early, Margaret, for you simply must come. Darrell has promised to sing—he's hard to catch for these functions and rather sniffs at Settlements, thinks them too patronizing. He *can* sing and—if Sylvia *could* accompany him?—Make her, Margaret. If you two could show him ever so little kindness it might be the making of him. Poor chap, there seems to be no feminine influence in his life. Somehow he's always stiff and unnatural with my people and they can't do with him at all."

"My dear boy, don't ask me to befriend anything so magnificent. One of us will turn up after the meeting. And do keep your eye on Jim and don't let him recite Corn Law

rhymes or Swinburne. So your chief has a bone to pick with the Government, we hear?"

"Yes; he's going to wire in to Waytansey tonight. I've brought you tickets, by the way, if you care to see how Waytansey looks when he's unexpectedly brought to book. You'll both admire the smart way he has of wriggling out of a hole when he's in one. And Dunstan on the war-path isn't bad fun either. And I must be off and look after Aylmer's notes and give him another dose of facts. And he'll probably mislay the one and forget the other, and after three minutes' hackering and stammering sail in in his most magnificent form and knock his man out of time and turn him inside out and generally make mincemeat of him and leave him without a leg to stand upon."

"Only wait till they let *us* into their debating club and see what Madge and I will do. Turn the men out, perhaps, and let them look on now and then through the cage of a Gentlemen's Gallery—without smokes."

"Exactly what Dunstan says you would do, once you got the vote, Sylvia. And the House would be a long sight more amusing than it is now."

CHAPTER VIII

MORE than one surprise awaited George Darrell at the social evening of which his friend had spoken at Wycherley House. As Hugh had said, he was inclined to look askance at these Settlements, and especially university and public school Settlements, where, according to him, those settlers were in, but not of, the quarters they inhabited. Besides, they did not really settle or live there; they shared neither the conditions nor the general life of the real inhabitants. The majority spent only a part of their time at intervals there; their actual lives and interests were elsewhere. They meant well, he was willing to acknowledge, but the trail of patronage was over everything; it was Lady Bountiful's charities in another and less material form.

To George the least hint of charity or condescension was high treason against the majesty of the Sovereign People. His greatest quarrel was with those settlements that had a direct and avowed religious aim; they were branded as sectarian. Yet he had been persuaded to speak and even lecture at some of these Settlement clubs, and Hugh was exceedingly proud of having persuaded him to attend one of the social Saturday evenings at that to which he devoted much of his own scanty leisure. So George found himself talking and handing tea and cake and sandwiches of generous dimensions with and to all and sundry, exchanging brisk repartee with sharp-tongued cockneys and generally contributing to the gayety of the evening with great personal enjoyment. And if the spring evening was warm and the atmosphere of the crowded hall somewhat heavily charged, in spite of the newest ven-

tilating system, he was happily unconscious of what gave Hugh Mascott physical nausea.

Somer's Hall was strong on personal cleanliness; its practically free baths and lavatories were notoriously generous and perfect at a halfpenny in the slot, but the raiment of the most thoroughly parboiled and soaped always retained its original and powerful bouquet when resumed, and even increased as the evening aged and brought it out by tobaccos of varying virulence. One of George's happiest gifts from Mother Nature was an absolute indifference to the quality of the air he breathed; hot and crowded assemblies had no pains for him, though he enjoyed the sweet live air of seas and wind-swept heights, as men enjoy fine old wine and other luxuries. The oblong room in which dancing was varied by songs and recitations that evening was fairly high, distempered in warm red, picked out with once-white, and blazing with incandescent gas; its only decoration was the drab-faced crowd that swarmed in it, dark clad for the most part, but relieved here and there by girls' white and light blouses and flowered hats. The high platform at one end enjoyed a red carpet and some pots of that dismal apology for vegetation known as the foliage plant. It was furnished by an upright piano, a harmonium, some music-desks and a few chairs, and ascended by an uncompromising set of steps at one side.

"No, no; you can't go yet," Hugh had just said. "You're down for at least one song and the accompanist is not come. Tim Nutt is here. Wouldn't you like to know him? There in the corner by the platform steps."

"Talking to that parson? That Tim Nutt?" He had long wished to run across the celebrated labor leader, but to find him hobnobbing with a parson, nay, more, a bishop, was disconcerting. And such a bishop! Outwardly only a small clergyman except for apron and gaiters and the gold

cross glittering in the gas flare on the black waistcoat. George could have borne the dress, apron, gaiters, cross and all, had this cleric made the meek and unobtrusive entrance proper to a personage who has no business to exist and effaced himself quietly and quickly in the drab-faced crowd. But that was not the way of this pretended sheep in wolf's clothing. He broke into the quiet of a pause humming with subdued voices, more like a burst of sunshine or a fresh spring breeze than a bishop, smiling, friendly, with outstretched hands and cheering greetings; and the whole assembly, instantly aware of his entrance, had stirred and turned with whispered murmurs of "The Bishop, the Bishop," pressing round to catch the friendly glances of his bright, magnetic eyes, and those privileged by personal acquaintance to claim a cordial handclasp or at least a friendly nod.

This was not, George thought, the way for working-men and women to receive bishops. It was all very well for this prelate to pose as the People's friend and feign to be hand in glove with every ragamuffin in London, all very well to take chairs and be on committees and associate himself actively with every effort to improve the condition and advance the interests of the working classes; but why did he continue to wear the livery and bow to the rule of the enemy and the oppressor? And why did he, while offering to all the handclasp of brotherhood, accept the homage and reverence of the sovereign multitude, yea, and issue commands to them? And why was the great and glorious Tim Nutt, the man who sowed sedition and discontent broadcast all over the country, penetrating to the remotest recesses of Empire, and never ceased to back the great employed, who by divine right could never do wrong, against the employers, who by virtue of possessing capital could never do right—why was the glorious Tim standing face to face with the man in the apron and talking earnestly, yet almost intimately, speaking,

one could tell by his face, with deference, and listening with respect?

That was the great defect of the Sovereign People; they were always accepting crocodile kindness and letting themselves be cajoled and swayed by the honeyed words of those who exploited and robbed them. Yet later on George, too, fell beneath the charm of the bishop's winning smile, owning him as a man and a brother, and, condoning the weakness of Tim Nutt, found in the bishop the comradeship of common aims and mutual interests.

Nevertheless tonight as he stood among the rough-handed people of the class he loved and was bred in, and looked at the empty platform with its unused instruments of music, a stranger, ignorant of Settlement ways, all the loneliness of his life gathered like a mounting wave and broke with a mighty crash upon him and his heart drooped like a lost child's. What was this he longed for with such intensity, that he had never known and might never have? He was only half aware of his dependence on the breath of sympathy, and of how much every fine capacity in him needed human response and stimulus. All he knew was that sudden blank anguish fell upon and paralyzed him at times and that, wherever he found himself, he was unclassed and an exile, and it was bitter.

When Tim Nutt had done with the arch-parson, would be the time to go and introduce himself. But their dialogue was long, the empty ugliness of the bare platform an oppression, the meaningless buzz of many voices an annoyance, he was lonely and homesick for open down-spaces and the sweet, sharp breath of plunging seas, and stood staring with sad, dream-filled eyes at nothing.

Just then a slim figure in a long dark cloak glided up the platform steps, unnoticed, and, still unnoticed, laid some sheets of music on the piano, placed a chair before it and

altered the shading of the light that fell on the keys. Standing with her face turned from the buzzing crowd below, and reading some notice on the wall, she stripped off her long gloves, and, unclasping her cloak, let it fall rustling to the ground; then turned half round, bent with quick grace to pick it up and toss it carelessly on the nearest chair, while George's heart gave a great throb and stood still. Then she flashed a quick, inquiring glance round the hall, and for a moment looked into his eyes, and the drab commonplace and buzzing monotony vanished, the meanest detail was glorified and the exiled feeling forgotten.

It was only Sylvia Mostyn, very simply dressed in a thin gown of turquoise blue, cut high but open at the throat and finished here and there with peacock-blue velvet. The ghastly glare of the gas only turned the coppery lights in her wavy brown hair to gold and made her paler than she really was, but it could not spoil her gentle charm and grace that seemed to fill the hall with light and sweetness; a bunch of primroses set off by the peacock-blue velvet that she wore brought the delicate beauty and fragrance of spring woods on their petals into the stuffy hall, and diamonds sparkling from a thin gold chain at her throat had the quickening freshness of dew tangled in gossamer and fragrant with hidden wood-violets. To Hugh the same pleasant vision recalled the deep blue of morning seas in the Riviera and the liquid trembling of a lonely star on the primrose promise of dawn.

The unconscious lady of these fancies sat at the piano and played the subordinate part of accompanist to a heedless flute, that ran at a terrific pace through such complicated mazes of cadenza as nearly brought the performer's eyes out of his head and ended in audible gasps from a purpled face, while a treble voice sometimes ran madly after the flute and sometimes seized opportunities afforded by the flautist's temporary exhaustion, to rush with frenzied rapidity through

labyrinthine evolutions of its own, till recalled to temporary sanity by some remonstrant chords on the piano. After that, in the dying away of the tumultuous applause that made ventilators and lamp-shades ring, George found himself, borne thither presumably on some soft breeze of delight, standing in the flautist's place by the piano, with an unnecessary sheet of music in his hand, bathed in the light of beautiful eyes that looked with gentle inquiry for his signal to begin the song she had chosen from two or three he had with him.

At the first note struck all the world was emptied and the crowded hall vanished, except for two young people who floated blissfully together on a silver stream of music. George seemed to himself not to be singing at all, but answering to the pianist's touch upon the chords of his heart, while the song rolled out in his unspoiled, untrained voice, that was clear with youth and health, richly toned by nature and vibrant with the deepest passion of life:

"Three fishers went sailing away to the West,
Away to the West when the sun went down;
Each thought of the woman that loved him the best,
And the children stood watching them out of the town;
For men must work and women must weep,
And there's little to earn and many to keep,
Though the harbor bar be moaning—"

and it seemed to George that all the life of earth's toilers was in those picturesque and moving lines.

Hugh, leaning against a door-jamb far off, with rapt eyes and quiet heart, delighted in his friend's beautiful voice. He was even more deeply moved by the song, for he loved the class George idolized as truly as George did, and perhaps more wisely; and perhaps his love for those who labor with hand and limb so near the verge of want was all the deeper because of the manly and wholesome personality of his most dear friend, who symbolized them to him. But he only

knew that George was singing with all his heart of the sorrows of laboring folk and the beauty and terror of the sea; he was not even aware that his own eyes were wet; his observation on the song was that the first verse was enough—the women, the children, and the moaning bar suggested the love, the joy, and the tragedy; the peril and toil was in setting sail at sunset, and the comment on life in the closing couplet.

"But why this insistent brooding on the sorrowful side?" asked Mrs. Ashberry, who was sitting near him. And they both wondered why this poet priest, whose life was chiefly spent in ministering to cottage folk, had so little to say and sing of their gayer and happier moments. "Now I know how to define a socialist radical," she murmured in his ear, as they moved apart: "A man who cannot imagine happiness under so much a year."

"According to Jim we all have our figure. Doesn't he say nobody ought to have more or less than two hundred a year?"

"Yes; poor darling. He thinks that amount settled for life on everybody would insure virtue and happiness to all and fetch back the Age of Gold."

George was not allowed to leave the platform till he had sung again in a more cheerful, but less popular, style; he was told that the People like to be made either to cry or to laugh and no mistake about it, and care not at all for mere cheerfulness and joy of life, and he was easily persuaded to promise to come and sing again on another social evening.

"I hope I shall not be so late next time," Sylvia said, "but it was impossible to get away earlier tonight."

"You were working, so late?" he asked, secretly shocked at the idea.

"Well—working? I was only taking notes and generally helping Mrs. Ashberry. She is devoted, as you know, to

so many good works, she and Lord Wycherley together, that is."

So she was the secretary. He was glad of that, in spite of the shock of finding that she had to work; it brought her a little nearer to his level. And she was waiting now, while the brother and sister were exchanging some last words with belated stragglers, waiting ready cloaked. Tremblingly he had dared to put the cloak round her and linger during some divine moments, holding her music sheets, while she drew her long white gloves over arms of a still creamier white. She was waiting for them and tired and it was nothing to them. Some shorthand notes, fallen out of the music sheets, showed that she had been working at the previous meeting, perhaps all day, he thought, as he picked them up for her. Then she looked up from the buttoned glove with a frank smile, and met his eyes, that were full of these thoughts and soft with still flame, and asked about the paper, now rapidly taking shape. No woman, certainly no lady, had ever looked at him with such frank unconcern, such quiet, intelligent interest.

"What a brave man you are," she said, "to take the whole responsibility of the paper. Even if I were a man, I am sure I could never do that—finance, advertisements, literary —everything—and with nothing and nobody, except a limited capital after the *Trumpet* is paid off, to back you."

"That is the beauty of it—a free hand," he returned with smiling confidence.

"But if it fails—like the others?"

"It will not fail, I mean to make it a success."

She looked at him with frank and thoughtful admiration; his strong, clear-cut face, handsome and resolute, gave an impression of calm and restrained power that cleared every shadow of boasting from the confident assurance of the words.

"I think it will," she said musingly. "What you put your hand and will to must succeed."

So the birds and the wind and the sea had sung to a village boy one summer evening long ago: "You can because you will, George Darrell." "And she knows that you can," he thought, with a joy that would have given wings to the tamest will.

The *Sunday Visitor,* heralded by flights of posters in every working-class quarter, was artificially nourished during the first frail six months of its existence by Lord Wycherley's money-bags, and for the first two weeks was supplied gratis to innumerable public houses, artisans' dwellings, and workpeople of both sexes coming home from work on Saturdays. In the seventh month it began to pay its way; in a year it stood entirely on its own financial feet, just returning the current capital expended in production, with no percentage of profit. In due time it achieved popularity and its usual corollary—pence.

But what toil and skill and care went to its making; what midnight watches and day-long activities it involved. The poet himself was exploited and persuaded that poems of domestic interest and family sentiment were his strong point—after subjection to editorial shears—and toll was taken with judgment and discretion of many an improbable contributor. The bishop was impounded for various minor uses; great prominence was given to the doings of the labor world; the woman's page was supplied—no one quite knew how—by Miss Mostyn and Mrs. Ashberry under the common signature of *Millie,* which was frequently and freely taken in vain in the editor's own replies to correspondents. These ladies had a great part in the earlier issues; there were very few details in the management and general construction of Jim's Rag that were not fully discussed with the younger of them, who had a way of listening, criticizing and suggesting by

pertinent questions, that was very stimulating. She could launch an original idea so as to make it appear the offspring of the person to whom it was suggested, and was often amused at the complacency with which the editor accepted the parentage of schemes entirely her own but audaciously foisted upon him.

She was proud of him, with the gentle pride people take in things they have made, mended, or discovered, and was not annoyed when Mrs. Ashberry spoke of him as "your boy."

"I have decided that your friend is to be a journalist," she told Hugh. "Please to remember by and by when he becomes a veritable thunderer, wielding Jovian bolts from the Olympus of some loftier *Times,* that I discovered him—and made Jim start him with the *Sunday Visitor.*"

Hugh smiled with the tender, half-contemptuous indulgence men have for feminine essays in things fit for lordly male energy. Yet he took no decisive step in life himself without consulting her.

"So that was your doing? You made Jim embark on this venture? But we hope George Darrell will do something better than journalism by and by," he said.

"Better than journalism? Why, the strongest lever in national affairs is a newspaper. Scepters are gone out and so are swords—except when these ink-pot Olympians give the word to draw—tiaras and croziers are relegated to honorable seclusion, but the Press still thunders and the world trembles."

"And who works the thunder and turns on the lightning? Not the glib and flowery stylists, who furnish the daily torrents of frothing prose in which facts and platitudinous comments are swamped and dissolved, not the man with the scissors and editorial pen."

"Who then?"

"The man with the purse, be he party politician, diplomatic intriguer, financial, political, or commercial potentate, or sometimes the foreign government spy. The wires are many, but they can only be pulled by the man with the purse."

"That is—Judas."

"Well, in this case, it's Jim——"

"So gold moves the world. Then all my fine illusions are shattered. Never. Besides, your enthusiastic friend is going to change all that. The ideal Press is to be independent and incorruptible."

"And socialist and radical? Good old George!"

Hugh observed with amusement that his friend was being well petted by these ladies and passed the brief leisure he snatched from his various labors at the house in Piccadilly, where he made acquaintance with people of value to him in many ways. This was exactly what he thought George needed, the formative and refining influence of cultured gentlewomen. That his starved family emotions might be warmly touched, especially by the elder lady, was probable; but that anything more than chivalry and friendly homage might be evoked by the younger, he never imagined; all the romantic fervor of his friendship for the gifted village boy could not destroy inborn racial instincts.

Nor had George any thought of attempting to bridge the social gulf between them. Partly because of the uncertainty of his own social status, which from his point of view depended not at all on birth or breeding, but on his own achievement, that moved him continually upward; partly because the strenuous ambitions of his life left no space for such things. Besides that, he had long realized that marriage could never, or at least not for very many years, have any part in the scheme of his life. He was content to sun himself in Sylvia's presence and enjoy the companionship her asso-

ciation with the paper from its first inception and organizing brought about, and scarcely knew how keen a zest the frequent meetings and discussions involved by the journal's affairs imparted to his life. And if the discovery that Sylvia held the post of secretary, presumably from the necessity of working for a livelihood, had elated him to a surprising degree, he thought it was because it made it so much easier to work with her and felt with deep satisfaction that it brought her nearer to him and made her enter with more interest into the social problems that most nearly concerned him.

Mrs. Ashberry often took part in the discussions and making up of the Rag; but not nearly as often as she imagined. She thought it her duty, as belonging to the general management of Jim, to watch the Rag's affairs on his behalf, as well as to stimulate and encourage the brilliant youth who was in a measure his protégé and had stirred the mother heart in her, though she was very few years his senior. Jim, moving as he did less in this sublunar sphere than in worlds unrealized, scarcely knew who managed the paper for which he wrote to order and financed. And while Margaret managed Jim and his paper and patronized George, with Sylvia as her deputy in these duties, she was serenely unconscious that George, himself more under Sylvia's influence than he was aware, was managing them all.

Her father knew little of Sylvia's share in the management of the *Sunday Visitor,* of which he had heard as part of the manifold business she helped Margaret to carry on; that either of these ladies conducted the conductor—in whom he was as much interested as in the conductor of a bus—never entered his head. Had she edited the paper herself he would not have objected; it would have been but a respectable equivalent to the slumming and athletics of other young women. What he really objected to and for that reason

hid away in a remote corner of his consciousness, a sort of mental lumber-room where many undesirable facts were stowed away, was the ample salary, he knew, and in a way was glad to know, she received.

Of the possibility of George falling in love with her, Sylvia thought not at all; she would as soon have thought of making a conquest of the Archbishop of Canterbury or one of the cabmen she sometimes regaled with tea on the part of Margaret. Yet his warm and earnest glance and the thrill of his moved and moving voice at the public meeting had quickened her heart-beats, and she never met him without a little pleasurable throb of excitement, while certain disparaging views on his character and the desirability of his acquaintance current in some quarters, roused her to fierce defense of him, and she knew that Hugh's friendship—there had been a moment of expansion in which she heard, though no one else had, of the adventure on Deersleap Cliff—clothed him with romance in her eyes.

So she took him under her protection without misgiving and determined to make a man of him.

CHAPTER IX

THE *Sunday Visitor* now fairly launched and setting sail for open sea, its editor's waking hours became full and fuller and those of his sleep few and fewer. He lived in a world of ever-broadening horizons and plunged into many movements connected with labor and upon these wrote—independently of his work on the Rag—and spoke much. But on Sundays, there being no issue of his daily paper and the week's Rag being finished and done with, he rose later, went to bed earlier, worked less and walked or rowed and sometimes allowed himself the luxury of appearing at the house in Piccadilly in the afternoon. Blessed Sunday afternoons, golden with sunlight or warm with hearth glow, that lighted up long stretches of barren week with an ethereal yet homelike radiance, that soothed away the weariness and languor of stretched sinew and overwrought brain, filling every lax fiber and drained pulse with the healing and vigor of mental repose and moral refreshment. They had but one failing: they were too short and too few. Just to lounge in a deep chair and listen carelessly to pleasant voices and light laughter, irresponsible and, if one pleased, silent, or, if one pleased, bearing part in the talk; just this and to watch the play of expression and change of light on a loved face was Elysium. Sometimes there was the touch of a sympathetic hand on the piano, mostly in silent, unoccupied twilights—an intermezzo of Brahms or Schumann, minuets of Mozart and Haydn, excerpts from Beethoven and Chopin, at the player's mood or the listener's demand—and a swift entrance into two worlds, music and passion-thrilled reverie.

On some afternoons—these were the gems—they were alone, the two ladies with the occasional shadowy addition of Jim; other visitors were always few and intimate; there was an unspoken convention that George should see all the others off the premises and linger for a heavenly half-hour, that would glide imperceptibly into two or even three on occasion.

It was on one such afternoon, a chill November gloaming, dry but with a moaning wind that had rain in its wings and foreboding of long, foggy winter nights to come. Half-stripped trees sighed and shuddered, scattering some last yellow leaves upon George, as he hurried with bent head and clutched hat across the Park, while a red sun sank angrily through purply black clouds spreading threatening pinions wide and high over the heavens. Welcome and cheery was the flashing out of street lights on the glimmering dusk of the humming street, where none lingered, but all hurried, more or less muffled and pinched in face; still more welcome the warm hearth-glow of the beloved room and the glitter of silver and china in soft, shaded lamp-light.

The two ladies were alone; they were dressed in clinging tea-gowns, shadowed with lace and revealing the gleam of white arms; their eyes shone with unusual warmth of welcome due to their return to town after an absence of several weeks; their smiles and kind words with the warmth and luxury, the fresh aroma of tea and wood smoke, scents of pungent chrysanthemum in great china bowls and finer perfume of rose and violet in silver and glass with that delicate breath of mingled, unknown sweet that in his fancy always clung about the younger lady, together with the magic of soft shadows and lights half concealing and half revealing the fair proportions of the well-arranged room, in strong contrast with the wild and threatening falling of lonely outside night, went to his head with a soft and healing

enchantment; and he sank into a downy chair, stretching his legs before him with a sigh of deep content and a feeling of having come home for the first time in his life and forever. But he knew that it was only for one delightful, too swiftly winged hour, and in spite of the joy, began to pity himself who had never had, nor ever could have, any real home.

The little homely touch of hot cakes on the hearth and a singing kettle on a hanger at the grate, with the stretched silken form of a great cat purring on the rug, pleased him. He had been speaking at length to a numerous and turbulent open-air crowd, after a hasty and frugal luncheon, and found the cakes delicious, still more delicious the duty of handing them, most delicious of all the office of filling the tea-pot from the kettle under the direction of the lady at the tea-board, while the privilege of conveying due tribute of cream to the haughty autocrat of the rug, who first refused and then angrily demanded it, was beyond words. An indignant scratch from the furred potentate was a sweet and tender souvenir for a week.

"Somebody coming up, and we are *not* at home this afternoon; I told Robert myself," Mrs. Ashberry grumbled. The door was thrown open, Lady Lisfearne announced, and the Violet Mascott of former days came running in, with wind-rosed cheeks and both hands outstretched from a maze of falling furs, bringing a rush of fresh cold air with her.

"I knew the man's 'not at home' was not, of course, for me," she said, after much effusion and kissing, tossing a muff here, a boa there, and subsiding in the chair George had vacated for her without observing him as he slipped into the shadow behind her; "and I heard Jim spouting poetry in his study; so I ran up for the nice chat one hardly ever gets with dear, busy creatures like you." Then she plunged into intimate family talk, only looking up a moment with

"Thank you so much. Just one lump," to take the cup George handed her with the usual question, and resuming the interrupted flow in more reticent mood, on becoming aware of the presence of a stranger. There had been no introduction, Violet having necessarily met her brother's friend at rare intervals all her life; but, beyond a vague impression of a face seen somewhere before, she had not recognized him, a fact of which Sylvia, observing it, was very glad, she hardly knew, or scorned to acknowledge to herself, why.

The pleasant nothings were bandied in cheery treble with a refrain of easily moved laughter; the great cat, his cream finished, his long silken fur dressed and his whiskers adjusted, purred happily, with blinking eyes and outstretched limbs, in the warmth, the kettle sang and the wood fire crackled; but for George, silent in his shadowed corner, the Elysian quality had gone from the enchanted room. His own personality weighed upon him, he was outside that charmed feminine circle, in which he had been so pleasantly folded a moment since; it spoke in an unknown tongue of things foreign to him and incomprehensible. Hugh's sister, the little Violet who had played with the village boy and let him gather nuts for her and carry her over rough and muddy places, the Violet, who, past childhood, had known how to chill his blood to ice with a calm look, and, with a cold but courteous phrase, numbing the very beats of his heart, to put him miles away even from Hugh. Countess Lisfearne now, she was putting him away from the sweet ladies who had taken him home to their hearth. But one day, and that not so far distant, the making of earls and countesses would be in his hands. A coronet might—not that he wished it—even be his. But he could never make an historic peer, only the centuries can do that, and he could never, never be one of that intricate and close-linked circle of the highly born

and gently bred, he realized sadly in a flash of insight, never own all those complicated relationships and life-long common interests, aims, and conventions, such as bound these ladies together and gave them a shibboleth and an open sesame that he might never learn. Only Hugh, no one but Hugh, could rise above these things and reach out to him over the gulf the warm, warm hand of true and loyal friendship. But for Hugh, he must always be alone, always deny the deep, home-making instinct that sends even the beast to its lair and the bird to its covert.

The wood-fire crackled, a burning brand falling asunder bounded with a sputter of ash and spark to the edge of the hearth-curb, making the purring cat spring frightened from his luxurious pose on the rug. George leaned forward from the shadowed nook, and picked up and replaced it with the tongs, catching, as he slipped back into shadow, a little smile and nod of thanks from the lady at the tea-board, that brought back the Elysian quality to the pleasant hour and cast the old magic over everything, lending a fresh grace even to the bronze Mercury, springing with winged feet from his pedestal, and a more celestial beauty to the engraved Raphael Madonna, gazing with that tender, immortal sadness from her angel-guarded throne.

"Our chatter is boring you," Mrs. Ashberry said in a friendly undertone, turning to him, and then quickly resuming the dropped thread of lady-talk. "By the way, Sylvia, Violet would like to see that photograph if you could find it—I thought I had sent you one, Vi dear."

He had shaken his head with a contented smile of negation in reply to Mrs. Ashberry, and Sylvia rose to look for the photograph on a distant table. Returning to the hearth, she paused by George and laid a marked newspaper in his hand, placing the contact block of a shaded lamp on a bracket behind and above him in its socket.

"You may not have seen this," she murmured, passing on to her place to show Violet the photograph.

All was changed now. Lady Lisfearne was the outsider and he the intimate, the member of the inner, confidential circle, too much at home for ceremony. The paper was an old one and the marked passage a criticized quotation from himself; it had been kept and marked for him only.

In reaching up and above him to light the lamp, some stray ribbon or lace floating from his lady's dress had lightly brushed his cheek, turning it crimson in the sudden strong light, and his blood to flame, while some soft folds of her drapery swept his knee and he almost felt her breath as she bent to murmur those few trifling words that were for him alone.

"Why not?" he thought with sudden audacity, a wild hope kindling in him; "oh! why, in the name of Heaven, not?" He was a man, after all, and some denials are beyond human strength. Who that tampers with the very basis of life can live? When was outraged Nature ever balked of vengeance? Not yet, of course; such things are not for a man still in the making; but in the rich, dim future that was drawing near, a dream that must come true. That basic happiness of fireside peace and stilled heart-hunger must surely further rather than thwart the attainment of high aims and strenuous ideals. A loveless marriage late in life, a calculated thing, honorable, not mercenary, but based on mutual regard and respect and warmed up later perhaps with the comfort of family affection, even friendship, had been the brightest prospect hitherto contemplated as a shelter for the waning autumn days of life and a retreat from the too fierce glitter and strain of public affairs. But why dash aside the cup of youthful joy that sparkled radiant with romance and beauty at his lips, or seemed so to sparkle?

True alike to his democratic views and plebeian origin,

George Darrell greatly exaggerated the value of birth and breeding and the magnitude of social distinctions and differences. Yet, after all, he reflected, she was but a paid secretary, a humble dependant, a homeless solitary, like himself, though so much better born and bred. He fancied a difference in Mrs. Ashberry's bearing to the secretary from that she used to the young countess prattling so gayly before her. Sylvia came and went at Margaret's bidding and even at Jim's, in spite of the familiarity of the Christian names. She had not married, though not so very young; it had come out in some chance words between these ladies that she was but two or three years younger than Hugh—and himself.

Just then it occurred to the capricious tyrant of the hearth-rug to spring lightly on to his knee uninvited, and, after some preliminary trampling, to arrange himself with majestic coolness and comfort there with his plumy tail folded in graceful sweep and his leonine face directed with solemn blinking to the fire.

George smiled to himself as he stroked the maned head and felt the vibration of the soft, warm body; the spirit of the hearth had taken possession of him; and those furred philosophers know and observe more than their slaves are aware of. The creature turned his head indolently back whenever the stroking stopped, asking for more caresses, and in his great, soft, inscrutable gaze many things lay latent and full of encouragement. "Why not?" his serene and steady purring echoed and his bright, asking eyes hinted.

Violet collected her scattered belongings and drew on her gloves. She must hurry home, she said; Hugh was to dine with them, had come up on purpose. Lisfearne was only in town for a day or two.

No one, least of all George, had the smallest objection to her hurrying home, yet her hurry drew itself endlessly out;

she turned again and again with an afterthought of cheerful and important nothings, and George, holding the door he had opened—who knew how long ago?—for her, was ready to explode with impatience.

"By the way, there was to be a demonstration—some socialist thing—in Hyde Park today," she said at last. "I wonder if it is safe to drive home that way? Hugh said there would most likely be a scrap, quantities of extra police turned on—the speakers to be arrested."

"There was a bit of a scrap," said George, with suppressed impatience, "but all is quiet now."

"Any arrests?—Oh! I forgot, of course, you were to be the chief speaker," she exclaimed, suddenly recognizing him; "were you taken up?"

He smiled indulgently. "Well, not that I know of; yes, I *was* one of the speakers. There certainly was a little stone-throwing," he acknowledged in reply to the shower of questions.

"And one hit you in the face," Sylvia said, with a little catch in her breath.

His hand went up to a mark on his forehead, with a quick smile. "A bad shot. I am afraid it was meant for the police."

"And I am afraid," Mrs. Ashberry returned severely, "that *somebody* must have spoken sedition."

"Or unpalatable truths? The people were angry at the police interference. That was all."

Violet kept requiring more last words with Margaret, who was obliged to go down the stairs with her, and George replied to Sylvia's questions that the action of the police was absolutely unwarrantable, in his opinion. He had been speaking at the time; there had been no real disturbance, just a few rushes from dissentients among the crowd, a little booing, some bantering, the exchange of a black eye or so, a

couple of dead cats, some potatoes and oranges and an egg of doubtful quality, misdirected by ardent dissentients at himself, little friendly amenities of exuberant spirits, really nothing; but the police must needs interfere, so there was no help for it but to recommend the meeting to disperse, which it did with excellent self-restraint and propriety.

"And do you think that the nicest way of spending Sunday afternoon?" she asked.

Not quite; tea and talk in Piccadilly was better still, she heard; but the day being composed of twelve hours there was time for both.

Then Margaret came back and the moments ran in sands of gold. The ladies had just been through the Italian lakes to Venice, and had much to say that interested their guest and revived their own impressions of delightful days in historic places, and haunts of art and beauty.

"You should go to Venice yourself, Mr. Darrell; you should go at once, while you are young enough to go wild with delight," Sylvia urged.

He certainly would, he confessed, at the first chance—whenever the money-ship came home.

No necessity for money, they thought; travel was now so cheap; it was incredible how far one could go for next to nothing.

But suppose it was just that "next to nothing" that happened not to be handy? A miss was as good as a mile, he objected.

"But do you realize," Margaret urged, "that foreign hotels are still so much cheaper than English, that one soon gets the extra journey money back—unless, of course, one goes to the great palace-barracks full of German Jews and American millionaires. What you spend on a tiresome holiday at some dreary bathing place, full of switchbacks and Pierrots and

bath-chairs and bathing-tents, would take you to the loveliest and most interesting spots in Europe and back."

"But suppose, dear lady, that one spends nothing on those things?"

"My dear young man, I can suppose nothing of the kind. No holiday? Positively suicidal. Think of your health."

"Why bother about what is perfect? I run about England a good deal—am speaking at Manchester this week: take a night train, third return, a fountain pen and a blotting pad. As for holidays, an afternoon at Wycherley House sets me up for weeks. And I'm afraid I must be off now" —he rose with a sigh—"and put some stuff into shape for the Rag, instead of boring you to death and wasting your precious time."

Then it came out in repudiation of boring and time wasting that they were going to St. Paul's to one of a series of Sunday evening sermons by the most famous preacher of the hour.

"Bellairs? Ah! I never had the chance of hearing him. A great gun, isn't he? Great on housing the people, too."

"Go and hear him; the finest preacher in the Church. Leave the Rag for week-days," Margaret commanded. "Why not come with us? We want a cavalier to fetch cabs; Jim would faint if we took a car out on a Sunday evening."

So the three sped like thought on silent wheels through an enchanted city glowing with jewels of fire, peopled by dream figures and thrilling with confused music of bells; and the stuff for the Rag was forgotten, its editor in the seventh heaven. Here was the river, gleaming fitfully in interwoven lights and ruffled by capricious winds. Above, sudden rents in the cloud showed stars swiftly sailing over chasms of blue space and swallowed up in darkness again. The hoot of a motor horn, clang of a tram-bell and general hum of moving

humanity, all had a new and musical quality borrowed from a voice discoursing fitfully in the taxi. And here was the familiar hill of Ludgate and the great dark mass of the cathedral rising above it, merged in the somber immensity of night. How it thrilled one to be, as it were, in charge of those two, lording it over them and handing them out with imperious injunctions to go here and not there, and be careful of steps, and afterward to pay the taxi-driver shamefully beyond his fare, renouncing in consequence a contemplated restaurant dinner in favor of frugal bread and cheese at home.

There was deadly fear, on entering, lest the elder lady should so arrange the order of sitting that the younger should be in the inmost place, and great relief when she went first, Sylvia followed, and the outside chair was left for George, with one solid hour ahead during which movement would be impossible. He did not observe the gentle triumph on Mrs. Ashberry's face, or divine in Sylvia the innocent complacence that always fills the female soul on successfully persuading recalcitrant males to enter a place of worship, still more that she was congratulating herself on the contrast between this evening's sober propriety and the lawless occupation of his afternoon.

How lofty the great church was and how vividly beautiful the mosaics glowed in faint touches of light, how the echoes rolled and multiplied at the smallest sound! What wealth of ornament, what dignity of proportion and richness of material! Could St. Mark's burn with warmer coloring, the mosaics of which these ladies had been speaking with such enthusiasm show greater or more varied splendor than these? Yet there was something at Westminster Abbey that one missed here in the brilliance and space. The Abbey might be grayer but it was grander, yes, and more religious; there was a sort of secularity and civic sumptuosity about this

clear-cut, uncompromising building that had no secrets and comparatively modern associations. One would have felt this quite as much, he was sure, if the historic association had been as hoary as at semi-mythic Westminster. Great men slept the last long sleep here as at Westminster; some so near the present that their dust seemed to breathe still, and, most appropriately at this heart of civic life, they were men of action. His place would be in the Abbey, among poets, statesmen, and thinkers. Death itself could not chill so utterly but that his ashes would thrill to the thunder of organ, surge of song, and stirring blast of trumpet in great moments of national life; they would thrill at the reverent footfall and hushed whisper of ardent youth breathing his name, laying a rose taken from the warmly throbbing breast of one as young as she whose light breathing he could almost hear at his side, upon the slab that covered him; they would stir and tremble with joy. George was still very young.

Now the air was shaken by a deep, soft surge of organ music and there was a general light rustle as the great congregation rose to its feet and the white-robed choir paced slowly in, a venerable figure in scarlet hood with white hair and flowing beard, led by a tiny curly-headed choir boy to the stall he could not see for age and bodily infirmity, following the long double file of strong manhood, supple adolescence, and rose-cheeked boyhood. The old fascination, always and vainly resisted from the days of the little village church at Deerswell, fell upon George as chanted prayer, soaring hymn, and solemn anthem rose and rolled among the multitudinous echoes that came as from another, invisible throng of worshipers in the dome, and the grand and gloomy denunciations of prophets with their calm faith and lofty imagery pealed from the lips of the reader at the lectern and were caught up and emphasized, now as in assent, now mockery, now challenge, by those invisible listeners, dying

away in murmurous comment, applause or derisive laughter, as fancy suggested.

"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live!"

Then a rushing as of mighty winds was heard in the dome and the knitting together of bone to bone, and the slain men rose, put on flesh and stood upon their feet, an exceeding mighty and great army.

The old overpowering feelings of childhood, strange far-off thoughts, something that could never die, surged up; he saw that Sylvia's eyes were lifted like his own to that weirdly vocal dome and that she shared the emotion that stirred him. Yet he grudged the uplifting awe, the solemn thrill; it was not fair, it was the privilege of the few denied to the many. Outside, under the shadow of the cathedral, were the million dwellers of slums and mean, dull streets of drab houses endlessly intersecting, and that wild and casual population in the regions round the docks. Where were all these tonight? None—so he thought—were here. A few superior artisans, the aristocracy of labor, perhaps, with some shop people and clerks, else the well-to-do, the wealthy, even the aristocratic, flocking in to enjoy the music, or hang on the eloquence of the famous preacher, who flung his burning sentences at them—so it seemed to George—with indignant contempt. The slum people, the neglected, the untaught, haunters of gin palaces and loafers at street corners, should be here, and the fine folk driven out with a scourge of small cords. It had not occurred to him that the slum folk were free to come and stay as long as they behaved decently. He had not seen that some were actually present. He had only seen that class at Salvation Army and other out-door preachings, in mission halls, refuges, and tin-roofed chapels.

But he remembered that his grandfather, while the beautiful and ancient village church was given up to the gentle-

folk, as he supposed, preached in a mean, whitewashed room with painted wooden benches, and in barns and sheds, or at best in a town chapel that was something between a railway waiting room and a counting house, where harsh, untrained voices shouted hymns in discordant unison to groaning and buzzing harmoniums, or that he fared scantily and lived and worked with his hands in a humble cottage, while the rector, a college-taught gentleman, fared sumptuously in a beautiful and commodious house provided for him at the public expense, or occupied himself as he pleased from week-end to week-end, kinging it over the whole parish and no man saying him nay.

One of the great aims of his life was to destroy this inequality, disestablish and disendow the national Church and throw these ancient and beautiful buildings open to ministers of all denominations elected by the sovereign People. With this aim constantly in view, he rarely troubled the inside of an Anglican church, fearful of that old fascination that always took hold of him under the combined spell of ritual, music, and architecture.

What insolence even in the worship of the rich, who appropriated these things to their own use and could not even say their prayers without folding themselves in an aura of sensuous enjoyment, he mused, while the exquisite treble solo died in the anthem and the rich harmony of the full choir caught up and repeated the melody, chasing it from voice to voice, and unseen multitudes in the dome whispered it back, and saints, prophets, and angels looked down from the silent and simpler music of harmonious proportion and balanced color.

What he did not see was the long-garnered wealth necessary to this glory of architecture, music, and color, or the slow development of age-long unity of faith, thought, and feeling of which they were the material expression—still less

the cumulative and combined self-sacrifice that alone makes such beauty possible.

The great preacher had a trick, probably involuntary, of pausing after the usual invocation on entering the pulpit, and looking straight before him, his lips working as if vainly struggling for utterance, his hands nervously clutching the pulpit edge; and, during that dead, nerve-stretching silence, George felt rather than saw a hand glide from a muff to his with a scrap of paper penciled thus: "He reads the Rag."

But this obvious appeal to the baser emotions was unnecessary to make him listen to every syllable with pure enjoyment of beautiful and noble speech. As one artist delights critically in another, he delighted in this man and saw what held all those earnest, moved faces absorbed, and touched them to tears and sometimes even to smiles, rare and grave, but smiles. He had the right technic, the full, flexible, trained voice, the delicate shading of tone; he had a great and just command of language, a true sense of rhythmic, cadenced prose, a mind stored with allusion, an imagination rich with imagery condensed in a telling phrase or word and some reasoning power; best of all, he had absolute sincerity. So whatever he might say, he would touch his audience. It is possible to enjoy insincere oratory, but not to be touched beyond the moment by it.

George began to listen in this critical mood, irritated by the capricious comments and occasional indecent chuckling of the invisible listeners in the dome, but was soon caught in the spell of the preacher's fervor; the matter took him, the manner was forgotten, the echoes continued to roll and mutter unheard in the dome; all that charm of beauty, art, and ritual vanished, the solid masonry dissolved, the throng of hushed listeners melted away; nothing was left but a soul speaking to a soul of eternal verities, and with burning ardor

setting forth the only hope and purpose of man's existence. In a drafty barn or dim-lighted shelter, on a windy hillside, in a sheltered glen, it would have been the same; surroundings were nothing in face of the one great reality. His eyes were dim with unnoticed tears; he felt that there was something infinitely greater and more precious than happiness, that all the beauty, glory, and delight of earth was but a bubble on the face of an eternal sea of joy and splendor. He had always known and vaguely acknowledged this, and in rare moods felt it; but he felt it now as never before—perhaps because the deepest possibility of human joy had become manifest to him as never before.

No great thing, he heard, had ever been achieved without sacrifice and detachment from things less precious. Yet he had come there, dreaming of self-advancement and scheming how to fence in, for his private solace, a piece of fireside joy, he who was sworn to devote every thought and power to the succor and uplifting of the down-trodden and disinherited of earth. And here, in breathing beauty at his side, perhaps within his ultimate reach, was earthly happiness, the purest, the most complete. If he reached out for it, would it divert him from his great aim? In that case, were it ever so easy to grasp, then let it go forever.

He turned with a great heart-pang and looked half fearfully on the face he loved, and saw it rapt, spiritualized, transfigured to a beauty that filled him with awe and great calm, and the certainty struck through him that here would be help, not hindrance, in the highest, most austere purpose. The chrism of a special consecration seemed to be shed upon his heart's deepest desire, his pulses throbbed with unutterable joy, and he vowed in silent fervor to win her, if possible, as a helpmate in the great adventure on which he was embarked.

Soon they were standing on the steps outside under the

immensity of brooding night, and looking down on the vast city, gleaming in rich jewelry of lights and canopied by a sky swept clean of cloud and starry with presage of frost, the warring winds laid to rest at last. Margaret had been caught and kept in the shadow of a pillar by a friend full of urgent talk; outside the colonnade, George and Sylvia drifted gradually together, watching the congregation pour in a black stream down the steps and disperse.

"Was it better than grinding at the Rag?" she asked, and he turned to her with a grave smile.

"I have to thank you and Mrs. Ashberry for a very beautiful experience," he acknowledged.

"He makes one ashamed of wanting so much to be happy," she sighed.

"Wanting? But surely there can be no wanting here—for such as you?"

She looked thoughtfully away to the quieting city with its coronal of lights and hum of thinning crowds.

"Indeed, such as I have far more than we deserve. And think of those others,"—with a little wave of the hand eastward. "For me a pleasant home, interesting work, many friends, purple patches like Venice; everything. But for them—'Truly the heart of man is a great deep,'" she said, quoting St. Augustine, with whom George was not acquainted.

So even Sylvia was restless and unsatisfied and cared to speak to him of things so intimate, he mused, unconscious that the application was general, as he was expected to divine from what followed.

"But you," she went on, "are perhaps too easily contented. Something you let fall today makes me think that you have not your fair share in the Rag's prosperity. You began that business on a minimum salary, and, knowing what I do of Lord Wycherley's childlike innocence of busi-

ness and that he leaves the expenditure entirely in your hands, I very much fear you have not brought the editor's salary up to any tolerable level. Mr. Darrell, you ought to in pure justice. You owe it to yourself, if only to keep yourself at a higher level of fitness."

"But how can I, when, as you say, the expenditure is left to me? Besides, the Rag is a sort of religion for me, not a thing to make profit of."

"And you cannot even take a holiday, while the profits are being lavished on that convalescent home in the Riviera and those workmen's flats in the East End."

"Certainly, capital things. And here is Mrs. Ashberry," he said, his voice unsteady for pure pleasure of that delightful scolding.

Five minutes later he had handed them into a cab and stood alone, watching it disappear down the avenue of dwindling lights, tremulous still with the touch of a hand that had just been in his and the sound of a voice still in his ears, scolding him so gently, and entirely for his private good.

CHAPTER X

I DO think you might have asked the poor boy to come back to supper, Madge," Sylvia reproached, when the taxi was buzzing them down the hill; "he looked so desolate and wistful, standing there all alone on the pavement."

"Do you? Well, I think we have had enough of him and to spare for a long time to come. What demon of folly prompted me to bring him here this evening, Heaven only knows."

"What spirit of wisdom, you mean. He was so happy with us and so fully appreciated the service and the canon's fine sermon."

"H'm. So I observed."

"Such a lonely life—no creature to care for him—to see —see that he takes proper rest and amusement," Sylvia continued, not perceiving the sarcastic note in Margaret's voice; "or even proper food. Men of genius badly want someone to take care of them."

"Oh, trust them for that. They usually marry fools and make slaves of them."

"Jim didn't, and wouldn't if he had. For you are not his slave. After all, what better lot could any woman desire than to spend her life in enabling some great genius to develop his gifts?"

"Great Heaven! And this from a suffragist, and a woman who does the work of ten men," she lifted her hands and raised her eyes to the taxi roof in horrified appeal, of which Sylvia was quite unconscious, having her own gaze

directed straight before her to the chauffeur's cap. Then Margaret's indignation boiled over.

"We must have an end of this, Sylvia," she said sharply. "That young man has been thoroughly spoiled and is beginning to show it. That is the worst of Jim's and your radical notions of equality, making intimacies with all the tag-rag and bobtail you come across. They don't understand it—how can they without breeding or inherited social instincts?—and become odiously familiar and insolent on the slightest personal intercourse."

"My dear Margaret, what *do* you mean? George Darrell, tag-rag and bobtail? The day will come when we shall all be proud of the honor of his acquaintance; yes, *proud.* Besides, he is not so very young. He is at least twenty-eight or nine. And as for social propriety—he is one of Nature's gentlemen, even if he may not know all the petty conventions and unwritten rules, or the latest correct slang, and the exact amount of bad grammar and mispronunciation and rude manners proper to people in society."

There was an acid intensity in these remarks and a proud coldness in their manner that told Mrs. Ashberry she had used the worst possible method for the end she had in view, and instead of putting her young friend on her guard and stimulating her social and sexual self-respect, she had awakened all her quixotism and protective instincts on behalf of George, who had now assumed the dangerous qualities of misprized honor and slighted worth in her eyes.

"My dear child," she said appealingly, "people are beginning to talk"—and by people, poor Margaret meant the extremely tiresome person who had so inopportunely buttonholed her at the cathedral door. "They can't understand that a handsome and attractive girl can interest herself in the career of a talented and good-looking young man, very

much her social inferior, without some dangerously warm feeling for him; still less can he, and I must confess that I did not at all like the way he looked at you more than once this afternoon."

"Do you mean to suggest, Margaret," Sylvia asked with cold pride, "that George Darrell would presume to fall in love with *me?* Let me assure you that he is far too understanding to do any such thing. Besides, if he did, he would know quite well how to keep it to himself. He understands perfectly the terms on which we meet. He is a man of ideas. I value his friendship—comradeship, I might almost say, since we work together—and have not the slightest fear that it will ever degenerate into any other kind of feeling. The idea is too odious."

"Then, Sylvia dear, you had better be careful. Of course it is all my fault, this spoiling and encouragement. But he should not have said what he did about his afternoons with us. 'Holiday enough for him?' What next?"

"After all, you are the attraction, Margaret, the chief attraction, at any rate. That I happen to be there may hardly improve the delightful afternoons for him. No doubt I help to compose the picture. So does the cat—also the kettle. He said it reminded him of his grandmother—a most unpleasant old person, according to Hugh. The kettle, the cat, his grandmother and I—together we set you off and make a foil for your perfection."

"This is hardly kind, Sylvia," pleaded Margaret with tears in her voice; "I scarcely deserve any such—such—" there was a gasp, very like a sob, "an insinuation. A woman of my age—and with my affliction, my widowed condition—an insult to my grief."

"Dear Margaret, forgive me. I only meant to show how nonsensical the idea is. You are very little older than I am—and look younger. People might take us for twins.

Widows are not insulted by that kind of thing, any more than sworn old maids like me. You know that I can never marry——"

"I know that Hugh adores you, and lives in perpetual hope."

"You are mistaken, dear. We understand each other perfectly. There was a—a little weakness of that kind—years ago, and an—explanation. Each of us knows that he can only marry where there is property and influence, and I not at all. I promised my mother to keep single to take care of Father——"

"And he is married again and forbidden to have you in his house."

"Yes; but he wants me all the more. I must keep free for him, Margaret, and I will. You know that I am not one of those fireside women who cannot exist without a little domestic realm of their own. My interests are many and wide. I need work, brain work, and the comradeship of men of intellect—like Jim and Hugh and the bishop—and the rest. I could never endure the mill-round of the average society woman. You and Jim and the *Sunday Visitor* provide me with all that I want. And if people like to talk about my intimacy with Jim and Hugh and the bishop—and the rest of them, it may provide them with a little harmless diversion; and this, I believe, is commonly supposed to be a free country. And it is marvelous how hungry church-going always makes people."

The taxi had by this time, after various ingeniously contrived circuits and long ways round, entirely unobserved by the ladies, conveyed them to their own door, where a couple of unseen jerks by the chauffeur had put the motor up to about double what it had been on the journey thence to the cathedral, a fact that the puzzled driver was totally unable to account for, unless it might be owing to the

direction of the wind or the action of impending frost on the petrol.

"Or the sex of the passengers," Mrs. Ashberry grimly suggested, giving him the exact amount registered and taking his number, with some moral reflections and counsels and warnings against a second offense, that he pocketed resignedly with his ill-gotten gains and the observation that he was a poor man with a sick wife and seven children, just like a Cabinet Minister convicted of taking tips from a government contractor.

After all, Margaret mused during the Sunday supper, from which poor George was excluded and which never failed to exasperate the cook by necessitating a more elaborate and ceremonial luncheon, or to upset Jim's digestion by the terrific onslaught long-accumulating appetite urged him to make upon unsuitable food; after all, there was no danger of what a thoughtless woman's tongue had led her to suspect. She felt so safe that she almost wished—after a glass of excellent still hock—that George was there, if only to save Jim the exercise of carving—or rather mangling—cold fowls and upsetting salad over the cloth by long-arm serving. Their protégé was undoubtedly a very nice gentlemanly young fellow; she had observed the restrained emotion in his face under the sway of the preacher's eloquence. And Sylvia, with all her radicalism and revolt and wild socialist notions, was clean-bred and had the instincts and prejudices of her class. Nevertheless, there would be no harm in slacking off the petting and cooling the intimacy for a little; it might even be well to contrive a Sunday afternoon without Sylvia for George's delight.

Sylvia, too, felt much better under the influence of mangled chicken and upset salad, and began to retract a hasty inward resolve to throw up the Rag, which was in reality her own child and as great a necessity to her as to George

himself, and gradually drop its editor—after securing him an ample salary. But, when she found herself alone in her room, safely shut away from all the world for a whole winter's night, something gave way within her and her pillow suddenly became wet with tears; she wondered why. Somehow, in spite of all, life seemed a very lonely thing. It was very hard to be expelled from her father's house and see her place taken by others. Hard to witness his unhappiness and discomfort, the recital of, and lamentation over, which she was so often the sympathetic recipient in snatched and almost clandestine meetings. Moreover she had twice paid dress bills for Verena and Gladys to spare him, and that was very hard. Just lately the double work of the Rag and the secretaryship seemed to be too much for her; but her life held no gentler and less exacting interests to turn aside to for refreshment and renewal; the ball must always be kept rolling, or that strange unhappiness, attributed to waste of power and neglect of duty to which she was subject, seized upon her. The great uplifting of soul under the preacher's appeal in the cathedral, the scorn of personal happiness, the glory of great aims and lofty ideals, the inward peace of sacrifice, all was still fresh and vivid in her mind. Was she to put a petty personal consideration, that did not even make for happiness, before the special aim of her life? George in a measure embodied that special central aim, representing to her as to Hugh the class they both loved and thought oppressed and disinherited; George was her instrument, fashioned in part by herself; through him she hoped to accomplish what the limitations of sex and a less generous intellectual endowment made impossible to herself alone. A great career was before him; but he was still undeveloped and wanted help and guidance; she might do almost anything with George Darrell, she held his future in her hands and could not throw it away; it was so beautiful and inspiring to

see his powers unfolding day by day, nothing else in life could have that zest. To forward George Darrell's career was her great desire and most sacred duty after her care for her father. Till tonight she had scarcely known how deeply she was concerned in him, the cause had been so steadfastly kept in view that the man identified with it had been eclipsed; she would always keep true to that sacred aim and to the man who was to be its instrument and whose magnificent mental and moral endowment she so deeply reverenced; he had no such friend and helper as she; he would never know, nor would anyone guess, what she had felt and done for him; she was content to be absorbed in his development for the good of those toil-bent caryatides, who bow beneath the vast edifice of civilization they upbear with such pain and straining.

It was the sacrilegious chatter and petty misrepresentation of this high fellowship that had brought those hot tears to her sleepless eyes that night—at least so she supposed—though perhaps the fear that George himself might not be insensible to such whispers, or have no such just understanding of the relations between them, may have helped to set them flowing.

And what if Margaret's fears were true? Well, after all, why not? Would it really harm him? Is that kind of heart-break so fatal? Might it not rather be the making of him, the completing touch in his development? Had he not heard and felt with her under the dome that night how poor and contemptible personal happiness is in the light of eternal reality? Again she heard the solemn message in the preacher's moved and moving voice stir the echoes in the dome; again felt the magnetism of its fervor and the peace of its high resolve. She would be very careful not to trouble George's happiness; though it might be more for his advantage to do that than to withdraw the stimulus of her friendship for him. Who could tell but that she had

been sent into the world for the express purpose of helping to develop this fine intellect and commanding personality? Of danger to herself she thought not at all, though she was fully aware that life without this inspiring duty would be worth nothing.

It seemed a special piece of luck that Hugh Mascott should finish his week-end leave next morning by dropping in to luncheon, and that everybody but herself should be out and late to return to that casual repast.

"Of all creatures on earth the one I most wanted to see," she cried, her face lighting up when she sprang from her typing-machine and came with outstretched hands to meet him; "no, you are not interrupting; one can't go on grinding for ever, and it's only ten minutes to luncheon. You know things and I want to know ever so many. That's the worst of Jim. He knows everything that has ever been written and nothing that has not. Outside of books that cat knows more than Jim——"

"When will his new volume be out?" Hugh asked rather vaguely, as he dropped into a chair.

"When I've time to correct the proofs. Oh, Jim's proofs and revises! The unhappy compositors turn green at the very sound of his name. But his stuff is worth it all. I shouldn't a bit wonder if dear old Jim ended by being popular—which would make him furious."

"Thanks to George Darrell, chiefly. George has not only written him up with amazing persistence but he has set the whole scribbling fraternity doing the same. One wonders sometimes how he does these things. It's partly magnetism —hypnotism, they call it now. Jim is the kind of poet that has to be discovered, else he blushes unseen and has to remain all by himself in dark, unfathomed caves. George discovering him made people look at him," Hugh said, pleased by her enthusiasm for Jim.

"But he is a gem?"

"Rather—of purest ray serene."

"Dear old Jim. But he's not a good paymaster," she said musingly, to Hugh's surprise; though, as he told her, poets never are, or are never supposed to be.

She was evidently thinking and not listening, as she sat in a pretty posture on the other side of the hearth, looking into the fire, with her hands—he thought how white and finely molded they were—loosely clasped in her lap, her crimson lips, so beautifully full when they met, close-shut in the form of a rose and tapering into delicately rounded corners, full of laughter. He lay back in his chair, his hands clasped behind his head, and thought her very beautiful, though beauty was not her chief attraction—or was he blinded by the glamour of the personality he adored?—he thought that as time went on her loveliness deepened and fresh grace was in her movements, a more powerful charm in her voice and finer intellect in the clear-cut level of her brow and depth of her liquid glance. "Pity she's such a blue-stocking. She's handsome enough for anything," he had heard people say.

She looked up under the stress of his adoring gaze, in that sudden, bright way of hers, and then looked down again, too well accustomed to him in their charming, long-dated intimacy to break the pleasant silence into which they so often fell when together.

"What things must I tell you?" he asked frankly, after a time.

"Well, what salary ought the editor of a paper, like our Rag, for instance, to have?"

"That depends—first on the rapacity of the editor, next on the generosity and solvency of the proprietors, one imagines."

"Should you think six hundred a year too much?"

"No, nor six thousand. I wouldn't be an editor for a diamond mine a year—paid quarterly and free of tax."

"If a man," she went on, heedless of this frivolity, "has five thousand a year for being a Cabinet Minister, surely an editor ought to have——"

"Fifty thousand, at least, and prison allowances thrown in. Have you been offered a soft job of that description, Sylvia? I've just been asked to take a pretty stiff billet of another sort—not only unpaid, but involving considerable outlay."

"*Noblesse oblige.* That is what you were born in the purple of the Great Unpaid for— You don't mean that you are to stand for Easthampton?" she asked with sudden animation. "My very best wishes. How I hope you will get in—but of course you will."

"Well, it's only on the cards. They may find a better man in the meantime," he said, warmed by the sparkle in her eyes and gladness in her voice. "Nothing is to be known, even here yet. But you ought not to wish me in—you, the sub-editor of the Rag."

"The Rag has no politics, and I have still less. And I should help you in if I possibly could, whatever I was. As George Darrell says, your heart is in the right place. You are solid for social reform and the uplifting of the masses."

"Like all good conservatives——"

"No, no, like all good men. Now I want you to do me a favor: persuade, if necessary compel, Jim to give him a proper salary——"

"Him?" he echoed, much mystified. "What him?"

"Why, George Darrell, of course. He has practically nothing and is unable even—he let this out accidentally—to take a short foreign tour. A man of his talents, in his position."

"Oh, but this is a delicate business, to interfere in other men's affairs. George would not thank anyone for that,"

Hugh said, rising from his chair in sheer astonishment, and standing, with his back to the fire and a shoulder against the mantelpiece, studying the pattern of the rug and the offended expression on the face of the majestic cat, who was rising from it in slow displeasure at this brusque movement.

"But he need never know;" Hugh shook his head at this—"and being by nature a gentleman—" "Ah, he is that," he assented, not observing two burning spots of crimson in her cheeks; "—he cannot appropriate, as I am sure Jim would wish or even suggest the appropriation of, part of the Rag's profits to his own use."

All this was a matter of course to Hugh. But he thought George ought to ask for a rise and probably would, if he wanted one. He was a strong man and quite able to take care of himself.

"Oh, but you don't know, no one knows, how unworldly and disinterested he is, how absolutely he gives himself to the People," she said with a fervor that surprised him. He was glad that his friend had found such warm advocacy of his interests and appreciation of his character. This championship was part of George's astonishing luck, he told her. But in the depth of his heart he was not wholly pleased with his dear friend's luck and was perhaps a little mortified at the comparatively cool interest in the great step in life he thought of taking himself. The appearance of Margaret at this juncture and her eager and unceremonial salutation of "Is it true? Are you really going to stand for Easthampton?" emphasized this coolness rather painfully.

"Well, I heard it from your father," Mrs. Ashberry said in reply to his wonder and assertion that he hardly knew of the purposed candidature himself, and that only as a possibility upon the acceptance of which he had been sounded.

Little else was discussed over the cutlets and spinach that Hugh found himself handing and enjoying with the zest the

wisest of men attributed to a dinner of herbs in certain circumstances.

"I do hope you will not let this opportunity slip," Margaret said. "You have been in training long enough. Now it is time to make a move and begin public life in earnest and show people what stuff you are made of."

He thought it wholly unnecessary to show people anything. Who were "people," after all? Mostly fools. And, if ever so wise, why should they want to know what stuff he was made of? He was a good deal divided in mind about standing, and on the whole thought any good the public might get out of him could best be obtained in this silent, obscure secretary business. "One learns a lot and there must be secretaries," he said. "My man has four. He says we are the first necessaries of life to him. He'd certainly buckle up without us."

"Let him buckle," Margaret said recklessly. "You ought to be in parliament, Hugh. Only I'm not sure that you ought to stay there. I should like to see you Viceroy somewhere."

"Thanks awfully. It wouldn't be bad fun for a chap not too anxious for a soft job. Mayn't I give somebody some of that white stuff? I must have a good dollop of it myself to cool my blushes."

" 'Nothing in his life became him more than his blushes' will be written on Hugh's monument," Sylvia observed to Margaret, who agreed with her. "Quite seriously, Hugh," she added, "you'd be the better for a little more swagger and bounce—internally."

"Ah, I'm glad you put that in," he returned. "The Liberal candidate is a bit shaky, according to Easthampton folk. Then there's the Labor man—labor must have a say there—who will he be?"

"My dear boy, don't you know?" cried Margaret ecsta-

tically. "Haven't you heard? It's only a rumor, after all, for he has not been formally asked. Guess. I give you both three guesses."

"The bishop?" Sylvia cried and then remembered that he practically represented labor in another place, which he occasionally made rather too warm for his peers on behalf of that party. "Then I give in. Ask the next boy."

"Gravelled," Hugh confessed; "unless it's Jim."

"Not Jim; but you are warm, Hugh. You both give it up? Well, it's—George Darrell."

"No," cried Hugh vigorously, "it can't be true!"

"Whispered at the National Liberal, denied at the Constitutional. That's what makes me think there may be something in it," Margaret returned.

"After all, why not?" Hugh wondered, recovering after a little. "If labor is to be represented—why, Darrell's the People's Man—at present. Once in the House, he might see from another point of view."

"He couldn't stand," Sylvia said, with decision; "with no money——"

That would be found, Hugh told her.

"Then he would never give up the Rag, and the two together would be impossible. Besides, with his other journalism and his constant, increasingly constant, missions to different centers since he became an acknowledged referee in trades union disputes, and the countless meetings and clubs at which he is always speaking, how could he find time?"

Hugh, who was considerably impressed by this accurate enumeration of George's activities, together with a fresh reference to his want of means and a repudiation of the possibility of his accepting the pay Labor members received from party funds, thought that if this rumor concerning Darrell was true, there was an end of his own candidature.

"I can't fight George Darrell," he said. But the ladies thought differently.

"And after all it is the constituents who fight. The candidates look on and wait to be chosen," Mrs. Ashberry asserted, to the great joy of Hugh, who told her that when her sex invaded parliament and she got in, as of course she would, she would discover that people do not glide with that lordly ease and indifference on the shoulders of ecstatic electors into parliament. "Don't I wish they did. If it only meant looking on and holding their hats while they fought over one, I'd rush in like a shot. But I hope they will send George Darrell and that he will get in. It's the only cure for his kind of socialism—though not infallible."

Then Jim came in and sipped some Apollinaris and nibbled a biscuit with more than his usual abstraction. Hugh and Margaret went their different ways and Sylvia followed Jim to his study, where she remained for a good half-hour, coming out with a folded paper in her hand and a smile of quiet satisfaction in her eyes.

BOOK III

THE PEOPLE'S MAN

If I could rule, if I could rule,
No rosy sinner should go to school
Unless it suited his innocent whim;
There never should be a knave or fool
But had his will, and never a tool
Should roughen his hand or strain his limb;
No sailor should sail upon waters rough,
No workman work at anything tough,
And every beggar should have enough;
Fine clothes should blossom on all the trees,
Good dinners grow thick as blackberries,
No one and nothing be different
From anything else, all smug and content;
And I really think a remarkable fool
Would govern the world, if I could rule.

From *Songs without Singers.*

CHAPTER I

THE office of the *Sunday Visitor* was not entered by marble steps nor was it hung with velvet. As a matter of fact it boasted neither cushions nor curtains of any description. The most comfortable thing in it was a large earthenware tea-pot, from which contributors and friends were in the habit of refreshing themselves at any time after 3.30 p. m. Even Mrs. Ashberry and Sylvia had been regaled by the dubious nectar brewed in it on one or two occasions, vowing there should be no third.

The place was bare and dingy and fundamentally clean, though not devoid of surface dust; its old-fashioned fire-grate was furnished with hobs, on one of which the tea-pot usually basked, while a black kettle hummed on the other; it seemed to have an abnormal capacity for accommodating cinders and ashes, against which no hearth-broom could prevail. The tiny patch of sky visible from the editor's private room, which was also the home of the kettle, never had a fair chance of proving that it was really blue (in the rare moments when it was) owing to the medium of dusty window through which it could be seen only just clearly enough to justify a perfectly truthful man in asserting that it was actual sky and occasionally occupied by suns and moons of doubtful luster. The cocoa-nut matting had more than once imbibed the contents of an ink-bottle; and the fountain of the black rill that meandered perpetually under George's hand over acres of paper was of the simplest and cheapest kind and had plentifully bespattered the table.

But no room in all London town and suburbs put together

was more richly thronged with golden dreams and glorious visions, or brighter with auroral hues of hope, after that pleasant Sunday afternoon, that had lengthened into the sweet and sacred evening at St. Paul's. To be very ambitious, very hard up, and very much in love, is said to be propitious, if not necessary, to success at the Bar; and George Darrell had each of these qualifications for success; the last was the greatest, he thought, and intensified the powers of the others. Why had he never dared to hope before? For clearly love without hope is of little use as a stimulus. The very air of the office, usually inclined to be stuffy, today had a fresh quality reminiscent of the delicate fragrance associated with an adored presence, and probably due to a petty larceny of which he had been guilty in abstracting a pocket-handkerchief from a muff too temptingly close to a coat pocket, under the shadow of the portico that Sunday evening. Sitting in unusual idleness in the editorial chair, he drew the stolen sweet from a breast-pocket and waved it gently before him, and the visions and dreams became more numerous and vivid, thronging the darkest corners and gilding the very motes in the misty air, while the smile brightened on his lips and the reverie deepened in his eyes.

A casual visitor to the office would have seen nothing but a fine, healthy young man with a frank and confident face, sitting at a desk in a bare and dingy room littered with files of newspapers, reference books, sheets of manuscript, and cuttings and galleys of print, and adorned with a telephone receiver in constant use. The finer and more penetrating gaze of a bodiless spirit would have discovered a minister of state, burdened with heavy responsibility and complicated care, holding converse with mighty potentates and emissaries from every part of the world, projecting vast schemes, disentangling complex intrigues, dissecting intricate diplomacy and detecting secret motives skillfully overlaid

with many folded masses of specious misrepresentation, making bold decisions, taking enormous risks calculated to change the whole structure of society and turn the currents of the world's destiny. He would have observed the eradication of many long-rooted abuses and the destruction of many evils inherent to the nature of things as they are, impossibilities lightly undertaken and cheerfully achieved, wrongs righted, suffering ended and toil diminished, a new earth—if no new heavens—created at the wave of an enchanter's wand, and a Merry England made desperately dreary by the abolition of all material discomfort and mental and moral discipline. The spirit would have observed further a beautiful sister spirit taking part in all the statesman's toils and cares, leading him gently from pitfalls, guiding him through dark and tangled thickets of statecraft, always inspiring him with brilliant ideas and always landing him in safe and happy havens of success.

"None of them have any idea of her value," George mused, pressing the delicate cambric to his lips and inhaling its faint fragrance; "they none of them dream that she has talents that many a distinguished, and successful man might envy. And when she has gained some knowledge of the world and insight into affairs—ah! some day they will know —they *shall* know. She will be a power in the country, an unacknowledged power, an uncrowned queen, with an unrecognized, but actual, court of the best intellects and most distinguished personalities in Europe. Does *she* know? She must know something of what she has done for me—perhaps only for the sake of the cause?"

Kitty Burns had done much for him, and he never forgot her, though that love was to this as water to wine; Kitty had made it possible for him to offer an unstained life to the woman he loved with such deep and reverent passion. Even simple Ethel Bantock had contributed to this in her way,

though perhaps honest red-cheeked Susan Welland had first led a perilous side of his character in a right direction. If Kitty had not been of exceptional dignity and elevation of character, if she had not handled that young and poetic passion with the tender reverence due to it, into what mud might he not have fallen, with his passionate and imaginative temperament and unfed hunger for affection?

A letter lay open on the blotting-pad in Jim's undecipherable hieroglyphic. He thought he knew who had moved Jim to the unusual and almost impossible step of writing anything that was not—at least by courtesy and intention—literature.

"It has just occurred to me," the letter ran, "that the salary of the editor of such an infernally paying paper as the Rag should not be less than six hundred. Pray excuse me for having forgotten to think of it before. These things generally adjust themselves at the bidding of those astonishing persons called solicitors, probably because they solicit nothing and demand all, and so leave one's mind clear for thought; hence my neglect in this case. Be kind enough never to refer to the matter; it will be transacted by bankers and entirely outside the finance of the Rag, which continues to be in your hands as before——"

She managed Jim so well—splendid old Jim—whose splendor nevertheless required a guiding hand to bring it into full light. An income worth the name was beginning to be necessary to carry out the scheme of life George had sketched for himself for the next two years, and competence means leisure. Dreams were coming true; the more one dared the more one achieved. This income and the proposed candidature, both coming so soon after the stimulus of that new hope— If she had not leaned over him to light the lamp that evening. But she had, and so kindled a new purpose and aspiration in him.

He had the happy faculty of quick decision, like a sure touch on a musical instrument, inborn not acquired; the question—Was he prepared to stand for Easthampton in the Labor interest?—sudden, unforeseen, and gratifying, at once summoned to mind every argument for and against the step, with the vision of all its possibilities and consequences, in orderly ranks like a well-trained army, and met with a reasoned and accurately weighed but instant refusal.

Never lose a battle, was a fundamental axiom of his; one reason for letting slide what seemed a brilliant opportunity that might never come again, was that he thought the Labor interest too weak at Easthampton, another was Hugh's candidature, another that there was more chance of influence and eminence in the political world outside the House than in it at this date, especially for an orator. He was not inclined to waste precious hours and days in listening silent, or drowsing on a bench, to the dull routine of Parliamentary procedure varied by enforced processions through division lobbies and automatic hear, hears, and laughter, hours that might be spent in brilliant and moving oratory in advancing and promoting the cause all over the kingdom. So he said that he was too young and too little known to have any chance at present and proposed a more eminent and efficient man, growing gray in the cause, who duly stood for the seat and lost it, as did Hugh Mascott, while the Liberal man came in with a substantial majority, slightly weakened by a Unionist rise from that of the last election, and thus a feather in Hugh's cap.

"Why did you let the chance slip?" Sylvia asked a few days later with reproach that made him quiver with joy; "we all want to see you at Westminster. And now you would be independent financially."

Then the thought came that she might have moved Jim

to that generous increase of salary expressly to smooth his way to Parliament.

"You shall see me there one day," he said with his confident smile; "but not yet. Lord Wycherley's generosity has opened the way to things I had never thought possible. There's so much to learn that poverty is shut out of—and so many things to do. That is why money is so tempting and so few keep clean of it, very likely. It's like a blight in May."

She smiled and went on taking down the heads of a paper he wanted her to do for the *Visitor*. The taint of greed was not yet upon him; she was sure that it never would be.

"I was so sure you would find that out," she said presently, and he knew that she was thinking of the power competence gives. They had arrived at that point of companionship when speech is hardly necessary and vaguest allusion enough for converse. They had also taken the habit of speaking in lowered tones and more intimate fashion, when Margaret, as on that occasion, had left the room, and breaking off and returning to the normal when she came back. On the afternoon in question she was perpetually rising and going out to fetch this or verify that, her mind full of everything but the possible relations between the two people working immediately under her eyes.

"Not that a good deal of happiness is not to be got out of money," he said, rather wistfully, during Mrs. Ashberry's next excursion.

"But happiness is nearly as bad as money—once it becomes an end—if anything great is to be done," she returned.

"Your parson was great on that—and he was right. One wants to be happy, though. And one is, incidentally, when it comes unsought."

"For an hour perhaps?"

"For an hour that gilds days, years, whole lives."

"Are there such hours? They must be more than gold, compressed, quintessential gold, then. The hour when that 'deep sighing of the poor' is ended by some thorough reconstruction of society, brought about even in part, by one's own labor—perhaps?"

"That hour, yes," he replied, though he had been thinking of something far more personal. "After all," he added, "there is a sound principle underlying priestly celibacy, whatever Protestants may say."

"What is that about Protestants?" asked Margaret, returning, notes in hand. "We can't have controversy in the *Visitor,* Mr. Darrell. But I quite agree with you on priestly celibacy, only the People would never understand. They'd think we meant to burn them at Smithfield at the very word——"

"Dear lady, you underrate the native good sense of the People."

"Nobody has any sense of any kind when red rags are fluttered in their faces. You may have observed that not only our dear Canon, whose whole energies and affections are entirely dedicated to the cause of the poor, but all our most useful and devoted Anglicans, nearly all who have really stirred the lowest classes—men of the type of Father Dolling—have been celibates.—What on earth have I done with those statistics now? I must have mixed them with my private correspondence. Sure you haven't got them, Sylvia? I must hunt for them again.—Isn't it so, Mr. Darrell?"

"I observed that the Canon must have given up something he badly wanted—and was content," he replied to some skirts vanishing in the doorway. "I shall have to be a celibate too, if I am ever to do what I set out to do," he added, half smiling, when Margaret was gone; "I soon found that out. And nobody will ever give me any credit for

it—any more than they do to Queen Elizabeth, unfortunate woman and great statesman."

"Somebody will," Sylvia said, looking up with the quick bright smile, that went more than anything to his heart; "I shall."

He turned in quick pain, his face to the fire, and, taking up a little piece of Dresden china, examined it minutely, wishing she had not smiled so happily, wishing she had betrayed the faintest concern, or even embarrassment, at this portentous announcement, wishing Heaven knew what.

"It is charming," she added, still looking up and meaning the china, not his resolution, "but very frail. And I don't know what Madge won't do to you if you break it," and he was strangely comforted, partly because of the familiar "Madge" and partly because of the possibility of a double meaning, of which she was entirely innocent, being in reality curiously elated by the prospect of this self-denying ordinance of celibacy, which seemed to bind her dear friend and comrade more closely and securely to her than ever without further fear of misunderstanding. Naturally she could not divine that the self-denying ordinance had recently been rescinded, owing to the new conviction arrived at—that domestic happiness with the stimulus of an Egeria's companionship was necessary to full development and achievement. The final return of Mrs. Ashberry to the room, and the close of the sitting on affairs of the Rag, prevented an explanation of this, and so left her to his regret with a false impression.

And even when in reply to another quick smile of confident friendship, he had almost crushed her hand in taking leave, with all the flame of a young man's passion burning in his eyes, she had no suspicion of the thinness of the ice she was skating on, though the hand-grip made her wince.

"I wish to goodness somebody would teach that boy how

to shake hands," she said, holding her crushed fingers and laughing, with exaggerated expressions of pain, when he was gone. "It's your business to tame our noble savage, Madge, not mine."

"We can't make him into a squire of dames," Margaret said, not in the least discomposed by the discreetly moderate warmth the savage had put into his parting grip of her hand; "even if we had time and patience. I rather like his honest rusticity. He's always natural and never vulgar. And really nobody could have been more tactful and pleasant about that terrific howler of mine in this week's *Millie*. He almost turned his correction into a compliment. That young man will make his mark, after all. You see he has taken my advice about going abroad and is having lessons in French conversation already."

And even her pleasure in Margaret's appreciation did not open Sylvia's eyes—he was the Cause, the People's Man, born of them and embodying them. Her early troubles and cares, though in some respects they had oldened and robbed her of young pleasures, in others kept her young. Relations, actual or probable, with men did not bulk as largely in her life as in that of most young women. That huge expectation of maiden futures, marriage, was shut out from hers; she had neither time nor inclination for flirtation; she was accustomed to men and their ways and took all that every-day masculine homage and admiration she could not fail to evoke and which is half convention and habit, as a matter of course, the natural due of her sex and age. Besides, she had been so constantly surrounded and enveloped by Hugh's unspoken adoration, which she supposed long extinct, that other people's seemed only natural. Already at twenty-five she had thought herself on the borders of that middle table-land so dreadful to the eyes of youth, and her celibacy well assured by that venerableness, but the deeper cur-

rents of life still unawakened kept her younger even than her years.

General Mostyn's affairs were to his young daughter very much as the affairs of a spendthrift only son to a self-forgetting mother. That poor man had never been a striking example of economy, even under the influence of an unselfish and careful wife who spent less than she ought on herself and child. He was now married to a masterful and intriguing woman with a taste for display, a passion for gambling, and an indifferent moral standard, and was step-father to two young women of the loudest and latest twentieth-century breed, avid of pleasure, greedy for admiration and totally devoid of consideration for others, true daughters of the horse-leech.

Time went on, but these ladies, their mother lamented, did not go off, in spite of some promising engagements, never crowned by weddings. They had no hesitation in announcing that for the present celibacy was their choice; they said they desired to have a "good time," and they had it. The perpetual hawking them from pleasure to pleasure, under which the unfortunate Mrs. Mostyn groaned, was entirely to their taste. Their step-father was always a delightful companion; he seldom reproved their wildest extravagances, and then only by gentle sarcasm or half-tender suggestion of better ways; they pronounced him "a good sort;" he even served them as a refuge from the righteous fury of their mother at times. That poor woman, in her turn, vainly invoked his just paternal wrath upon them; she had to bear everything, she complained, his indignation at their conduct, for which he made her answerable, as well as her own displeasure and annoyance. She expressed herself as unable to understand that a man who had commanded regiments and even brigades could not keep two young women in order in his own house, a fact that he was himself at a loss

to explain, till one day he was goaded to retort: "I might manage the two, my dear, but you see there's a third in the house," with disastrous results.

Whenever family affairs reached boiling-point, like this, Sylvia was called in to act as a species of arbitration court, a most uncomfortable function that usually resulted in concentrating the whole of the family wrath upon herself, so that she learned to shudder at the sight of an invitation to lunch or dine with her people.

"If you had only stayed at home," was her father's frequent reproach after a general engagement of this description, "you might have kept us all straight," and she always forbore to remind him that he had himself sent her away. "Not that I blame you," he would add; "for why should you be sacrificed? This menagerie is no place for you to live in. And you are always my own little girl," he would finish, with genuine feeling tinged by remorse—especially when his own little girl had contributed to any financial settlement of difficulties—and the incident would frequently be closed by a quiet little dinner of two at Sylvia's club or some restaurant favored by her father.

Family intercourse like this is anything but refreshing, yet it had a satisfactory side and filled up many blank places in Sylvia's life; the little semi-clandestine dinners, usually reported to the late Mrs. Bowers as "dining at the Rag" and occasional theaters and flights to Richmond, Hampstead, even Brighton, made up for much.

And while time went on and Verena and Gladys failed to go off, the production and steady circulation of the *Sunday Visitor* and Jim's poetry, besides the direction of Margaret and her brother's extensive charities and societies, also went on and the world in which they all lived changed imperceptibly, passing with stealthily silent footstep towards the great final goal. In the meanwhile the office of the *Sunday Visitor*

retained its Spartan frugality, while its coffers filled and its circulation increased, and the life of its editor became continually broader, more complex and fuller of interests.

In the spring following the November Sunday at St. Paul's, there was a visitation of influenza that laid many households, and among them that of General Mostyn, low, one after the other in quick succession. The girls began, the servants followed suit, Mrs. Mostyn escaped with a slight feverish attack, and last of all the general went down under an attack of concentrated virulence, and the nurses, not long released from the care of the others, had to be recalled. Verena and Gladys were by this time recruiting on the Italian lakes as the charges of an elderly relative who was already beginning to repent her hospitality; and the late Mrs. Bowers, a good deal run down by recent anxiety and her own little taste of the common malady, was alone with the sick man, except for servants and nurses, and was querulous and irritable beyond description at the general's bearing.

"Where's my little girl? I want my little girl," the poor, semi-delirious man continually moaned; but Sylvia, who had been continually to and fro, amusing her father and cheering the invalids, during the visitation, was not allowed to see him in his own illness when she came to the house. He was to be kept absolutely quiet and see no one, she heard.

"It can't go on, it can't last much longer, Sylvia," her step-mother sobbed; "too ill even to see his wife! I am only allowed in the room five minutes at a time and those dreadful women watching, ready to pounce upon me, all the while. It ought not to be allowed. I am willing to be with him day and night—*I* should never think of going to bed by night or by day either; *I* should require no time for exercise and meals and nonsense—like those heartless, mercenary harpies—giggling and chattering together while my

darling is dying. And who but his wife should soothe and comfort him? If only he were left to me I could bear it. If only I might have his last precious hours to myself to think over when he is gone, it would be so very sweet. The doctors have no right to shut me out. There should be a law against such things. I do creep in occasionally in spite of them—but what can I do against so many? It is wicked. They set him against me, too. I think with all your cleverness and scribbling, Sylvia, you might at least write to the *Times* about it. And certainly you ought to take my part against these stupid doctors and *insist* on my being admitted to my husband's bedside—my very own husband and he dying —and send away those harpies. No one dared come between me and my poor Bowers—he had no daughter to side with strangers against his own wife. Verena and Gladys were still in the nursery, else I should have died of grief. As for *your* pushing yourself in and worrying your father in his last moments, it is not to be thought of for a moment. I suppose there never was a more unfortunate woman than myself—twice widowed, twice—and *both* so handsome—and so unreasonable."

"Indeed, madam," a breathless day-nurse, lying in wait for Sylvia outside doors or behind furniture in the hall, would whisper to her, "we must smuggle you in somehow. Couldn't you go round through the kitchen and up the back stairs and wait till I come? It's 'I want my little girl,' all day and all night, and it did soothe him yesterday."

Then would follow a game of hide-and-seek and a weaving of domestic conspiracy with the cognizance and concurrence of doctors, one of whom on one occasion popped Sylvia into a wardrobe and put his back against the door and kept her there half-suffocated during an untimely incursion of Mrs. Mostyn—whose presence never failed to

send up her husband's temperature and increase his suffering —till the coast was clear and she was let out, gasping.

And once Mrs. Mostyn's hysteria, together with her husband's danger, justified the doctors, with a little stretch of conscience, in giving her what they called a nerve calmative, which made her sleep peacefully till morning light and gave the general one last chance of turning the corner.

That night Sylvia passed in her father's room, giving him little things prepared and handed her by the nurse, humoring and soothing his feverish fancies, and seeing him at last sink into a deep, scarcely breathing sleep, which at first she thought was the end, but in reality was the turning-point to recovery.

"It was Mrs. M.'s draught brought the general round," the night-nurse said afterwards.

It was after a night somewhat of this character when Sylvia went back to the house in Piccadilly early in a sweet spring morning of sunlight, birds' song, and dew, loitering through the Park, drinking deeply of the quickening freshness of daybreak—an hour that most people carefully shut out and darken with blinds and curtains, and which birds, street boys, policemen, and early laborers enjoy without thinking of it. The hour when, "all bright and glittering in the smokeless air," grimy London "doth like a garment wear the beauty of the morning"—

> "Never did sun more beautifully steep
> In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill,"

than does summer sunrise the smutty buildings and sooty tree-trunks of London town, nor does Aurora often come anywhere with balmier breath than in that quiet hour of the great city's brief night, the enjoyment of which is left to the solace of thieving sparrows and martial and marauding cats.

Birds more melodious than sparrows were in full song this morning in the Park; lilac-scents and the fresh pungency of newly-sprung verdure filled the clear and dewy air; waterfowl were audible from their reedy covert; grass and unstained foliage glowed golden in floods of clear sunlight. The deep peace and beauty were almost too much for the wearied girl worn by the long and anxious watches of so many sleepless nights.

"He'll do now, madam, don't you fret," the nurse had said, persuading her to go home and rest; "absolutely nothing the matter with him now and eating for three. Such vitality; he'll be up and about in a day or two."

The day before, under pretext of necessary change of air, and pain of complete but quite imaginary breakdown, Mrs. Mostyn had been commanded by imperious doctors to the wilds of Wales, to the deep and secret joy of the general, who was now well enough to understand that the change was decreed more for his benefit than his wife's, and had implored her almost with tears to desist from sacrificing herself to him, and pay some slight attention to her own health—an objurgation that sent the corners of the nurse's mouth up and brought a twinkle to his own eyes. So now the trouble was all over and the world bright and gay at the sweetest moment of the day and year; and yet Sylvia was all one wild desire to take refuge in some kind arms and cry her heart out; for the perpetual fret and wrangle of Mrs. Mostyn's querulous temper and mad jealousy had been long and trying.

But there were no kind arms to weep in, except Margaret's; and she, besides being comfortably in bed at the moment, was too busy with work neglected by her secretary to be available for this purpose, while Jim, with all his kindness and generosity, was hardly equal to that sort of service. And, though Sylvia was no heathen—her religion

was a sound one and wore well both for everyday and Sunday use, like a diamond that is good equally for a king's crown or a workman's tool—she was made of that frail human stuff that cannot do long without human sympathy.

And now, in the sweet air under the shade of these thin-leaved trees, the quiet, so refreshing after the heavy atmosphere of the sick-room, where the beating of the death-angel's wings had but just stilled, was deepened by the distant growing roar of the great city's wakening, and some golden moments of relief floated by on sunny wings and the tears of weakness dried. One by one came sounds—the ever-cheerful errand boy's whistle, shouts of happy children, bugle-calls from barracks hard by, the quick, sharp tramp of soldiers—personal solitude deepening with the sense of multitudinous life and closing round her like prison walls, when all at once the fresh sunbeams, slanting through thin-leaved boughs, played upon a strong, spare figure, with a darkly handsome face, glowing eyes, and gallant bearing, that came up to her with a look of sudden transfiguring joy, and Sylvia's heart gave a great bound and stood still, as George Darrell's strong hand closed tightly over hers and the fire in his eyes went through her.

No one had ever moved her like this. Yet he had impressed her more deeply than she ever cared to own from the moment when first she met his inspired and penetrating gaze and felt the glamour of his genius. And this morning it was a beautiful and chivalrous embodiment of strong and sane early manhood that stood before her in the sunshot shadows, animated by the devotion to her that she was obliged to recognize at last, and bringing the country simplicity, the dewy-freshness of wind-blown spaces, wide horizons and shadowy woodlands, characteristic of him and making him part of the life and beauty of the sweet morning.

They seemed to have stood a long time in the scented

sunlight, saying nothing and feeling much, while children rollicked by and people came and went, hardly noticing two young people meeting casually with the conventional hand-clasp. And then with one consent they moved slowly to a shaded and sheltered bench, quiet and out of the way, sweet with lilac and blackbird's song, and wondered at the pure sapphire sky-spaces, so deep and crystal clear between great masses of high-sailing, pearl-white cloud, and the golden transparence of sun-thrilled leaves, George strangely quiet and humble overcome by the sudden rapture of certainty that had come upon him at the flash of vivid color in Sylvia's white and weary face and the quick return of elasticity to the relaxed and languid figure he had seen drooping with abandoned grace on the gridiron Park seat.

Any lingering shadow of doubt in him was dispelled by the quiver of the hand, held like a captured bird in his, and the look in the clear depths of her eyes. It was like breaking inadvertently into a sanctuary; she was off guard and defenseless; he would take no mean advantage; and when the first flush at meeting had faded a little, she looked so tired and fragile, as if a breath might have brushed her away or a sound shattered her, nothing which might disquiet must be so much as hinted at. He gathered that she had been sitting up all night after many days of anxiety. It was her hour of weakness; she was hardly herself; he would not even take the happiness of looking at her, content to know she was there, sweet and fragile like a drooping lily, he thought.

Pleasant to be out in the morning freshness, they agreed; Paradise was not in Asia, nor any happy island in summer seas, but in a London park in morning and May, George thought; but Sylvia said that Bond Street shops were too near it for the virtue of any Eve. The scent of lilac bore the palm for freshness and spring feeling, it was so different from any other flower scent and so little hackneyed by out-of-

season growth. Even lily-of-the-valley, a spray of which, garden-grown, fresh and strong, he had laid silently on her lap, was hardly so characteristic of spring at its best. Association was the soul of perfume. Burning weeds in autumn, the uncut leaves of new books, pungent odors from turnip fields and rotting leaves, were sweeter than roses. Sylvia had a special weakness for the lingering scent of a room habitually smoked in. George's favorite was the smell of leather-bound books in a sunny room. Then she heard of secret, solitary joys of school-days, when part of the dinner and play-hour was snatched for a run to a library, to which his grocer friend had access as member of a club it belonged to. Founded upon great ambitions, the library had fallen, with the institution from which it sprang, upon evil days; few had access and fewer still cared for access to it; nothing newer than the early 'forties was on its shelves, which still held in diminished splendor a noble company of chosen volumes and was particularly rich in belles lettres and poetry.

"There I learned nearly all that was worth learning," he said, descanting upon the rapture of bursting into the silent, sunny, south room, with its long windows opening on the market square, and ransacking the book-covered walls, where the gold-lettered calf bindings glittered and basked in the sun and a happy boy crouched reading on a window-sill, while the silence was made audible by mysterious creaking and ticking in old wood and worm-mined bindings, and all the life of the town flowed past in its main artery outside. The smell that was most homelike to him was wood smoke mixed with bacon and greens; that was Grandmother cooking the cottage dinner, that was Deerswell. The most august and solemnizing was the church smell, made up of dampness, hewn stone, rich antique woods, clean choir surplices, fresh-soaped faces, wax candles, and cocoa-nut matting.

"But you don't know the real church smell, with flowers and the rich intoxication of incense," she said.

"Paganism pure and simple. Not I."

Then she heard of a marvelous symphony of scents composed of coffee and cigars mingled with rose, myrtle, and clematis, crushed grass, mignonette and dewy earth, when Jim's fine voice, sounding through the night silence, had opened the treasure-house of English poetry to a cottage boy crouched trembling under a bay hedge on the moonlit terrace at Deerham. Then of the lilac scent in Grandmother's garden, with odors like celestial wine in the glowing jewel-cups of the tall May tulips, and the delicate fragrance of apple-bloom from the gnarled and lichen-covered tree by the draw-well with its dripping bucket and mossy roof.

"Even now I can't think of Eden without seeing the dear old garden and the bee-hives and the donkey in the paddock beyond," he said, and she thought these allusions to the lowly home became him well, and thrilled with pleasure at sharing thoughts and memories so intimate.

She knew the cottage well, she said, with its thatched roof and mossy well and the donkey looking over the garden hedge and the old lady trotting to and fro among the flowers. She even had a vague memory of a boy at the well.

They smiled in each other's eyes in a pleasant silence.

"Was I that boy?" he asked presently. "I sometimes wonder. I know all the things he did and thought; but he seems to be somebody else—that I'm sorry for—though I'm often disgusted with the little beast. In the dear old church with the parson droning away and the sun in the martyrs' robes and the bees humming, the boy used to wonder how long—or if at all—this I-ness, this identity, could last—or if things in other worlds were only a dream after all."

"But the boy was happy?" she asked.

He looked through the luminous mists of verdure with a faint sight. "He had no mother," he said plaintively. Then she heard of the carol-singing at Deerham Place, of happy children seen caressed and feasted round the Christmas-tree through the lighted windows of the warm, bright hall, of the aching desolation of the boy singing in the cold and dark outside.

"Jealous little ass!" he commented, throwing back his head and shoulders with a lion-like shake and hearty laugh; then a clock struck the hour, making both start, amazed at the time passed, and he sprang to his feet with an exclamation and hurried off to fetch a cab for her, pointing out a short cut she was to take to the nearest gate to meet it.

One more warm, firm hand-pressure and mutual smile as he handed her in, then he stood alone rooted to the pavement in the sunshine, looking after the cab in an exquisite dream. He must not speak yet, but she understood. Had the old man died, instead of getting better, it might have been. There was a suspicion that the father—somebody said he was a retired officer with a small pension and a second wife and family—had to be helped by the grown-up daughter. Things she had let fall now and then had given him that impression. People grew old and looked to their children for comfort and support.

Perhaps he drank. She might well be tired, if she had been watching the "horrors" all night. How could she marry with such a skeleton in the closet, she—with her brave soul and sensitive self-respect? Shameful that such a burden should fall on one so young, so fragile, so lovely. Dared he offer to share it? It would drag him down just as he was rising so buoyantly to the sunny surface, for he was already in Parliament and a personage in the journalist world; but he loved her better than life, better even than success.

CHAPTER II

WELL, I'm glad the night was so good. But my poor child—" Margaret began in melancholy sympathy, when Sylvia came into the room where her friend was breakfasting and speculating on the probability of Jim's coming in and the absolute certainty in that event of his demanding hot, freshly-cooked dishes on the instant. She changed her tone after another look at Sylvia's bright face and the feel of her cool, fresh kiss: "Not a bit poor, looking as fresh as paint," she said, holding her at arm's length. "There never was such a girl for turning up smiling after a knock-down. One would think you had only been primrosing in the woods. Ah! lilies, not primroses."

"Picked up in a shop, but gathered in a wood, perhaps, they are so sturdy and sweet. Sweeter still to me is that nice hot bacon. Father is quite out of the wood, they say. I went and sat in the Park by Nurse's order and 'Earth *had* not anything to show more fair,' and I'm as hungry as a hunter." She laid the lilies tenderly by her plate, while Margaret poured coffee and handed her rolls and bacon and brimmed over with the morning's correspondence, the day's engagements and the paper's usual notorious emptiness of news. But Sylvia, putting in murmurs and interjections at suitable moments, saw nothing with those lustrous eyes of hers but a tall and knightly figure merging from the deep, sweet heart of dewy morning into the sun-pierced leaf-shadow, his beautiful, strong face and dark, penetrating eyes full of the passionate sweetness and strength of coming summer. How the dews had glistened on the shadowed fringe

of grass, how the birds had sung—that reckless, headlong blackbird with his ecstatic shout and the long, passionate trill he must have learned one wakeful night from a nightingale! What freshness in that breezy cry of swifts high up in the blue, and what magic in the lilac scent and softer perfume of massed wall-flowers, what glory in those tall sun-drenched tulips! All day long the vision lasted, making typewriting go wrong and columns of figures mount to extraordinary totals, eclipsing lines of print on paper and book, persistent still in moments overcome by drowsiness and penetrating even to dreamland.

It was the first time that all-powerful and sight-clearing spell of the Great Enchanter, whose wand opens so many new worlds, had fallen upon Sylvia, and it was strong. Many folds of mist were swept from her eyes; the world and all in it was clothed in a fresh auroral radiance and full of loveliness and joy; it was stronger than the strongest flight of imagination thought possible; that sweet dream in the teens had been but a gentle flicker in comparison. But the delightful comradeship was over, and there could be no possible happy ending to this new thing.

When George called for the weekly chat over the Rag a few days later her place was empty; he was told that family affairs engrossed her for the present. The following week brought him a friendly note from his favorite contributor to the effect that family affairs still claimed all her time, and that as she was going abroad for an indefinite time, and Mrs. Ashberry would be left single-handed during her absence, it might be well to find someone to fill the place of the bipersonal Millie, who would be unable to continue her contributions. It would even be an advantage to the paper to have a fresh hand with fresh ideas.

"And I only keep on Millie for *her* sake," he muttered, crushing the letter in his hand.

Then he jumped up, took his hat, rushed out and in a few minutes appeared at Wycherley House, where he found Sylvia as usual at the writing-table in the room that he thought the sweetest place on earth.

"Mr. Darrell," the servant said in the usual indifferent voice, not divining the stupendous nature of the announcement, and Sylvia looked up startled, a crimson flush going over her face and leaving it white.

"This news is too dreadful to be true," George said, plunging into his grievance without ceremony in his downright way; "it means the extinction of the poor Rag!"

"Not at all, but a new lease of life. The Rag is a sturdy fellow, quite able to go ahead alone." She smiled the little, fluttering smile that always took his heart, speaking with gentle decision and putting a fresh sheet into the machine, that had been clicking so busily when he came in.

"But what is to become of *me?* How can I conduct the paper without you?" he asked in a miserable voice; "you have always done it practically."

"Mr. Darrell! You know that is absurd." The rebuke was more in the voice than the words.

"It is not absurd. It is true. If you throw me over, the *Sunday Visitor* is done for. And it has become a power—it was doing good work."

"So it will continue. The trivial part that we contribute —Mrs. Ashberry and I—is negligible; and now that the paper is grown to maturity and has shed some of its earlier appeals to the popularity Lord Wycherley so often deplores, it would do well to be rid of that last pettiness of Millie."

"Do you really think that, Miss Mostyn?" he asked despairingly, utter misery in his darkly-glowing, tear-misted eyes.

"Certainly." Her voice was chilling, but it had the faintest suspicion of a tremble; her glance wandered to the

window and then returned to a sheet of paper lying by the machine, on which she began to pencil some intricate arabesque, while a clock ticked with aggressive emphasis and a huge velvety bumble-bee buzzed about the room and tumbled against the window-pane, like a miniature aeroplane.

"It isn't that altogether," he faltered, half-audibly at last; "it is that—that it is my only chance of seeing you; that I can do nothing without you, that you are my sole inspiration, my Egeria—my——"

"How can you talk such nonsense?" she asked with a little sigh, knowing very well that the nonsense was plain fact. For how was she to live without those meetings? What was her interest in things political and social without that stimulus of the weekly discussions over the Rag? "Why make such a tragedy of a trifle? It is unworthy of you, George Darrell."

"It is not unworthy, it is the worthiest thing in me that I have the sense to know what I owe to you, to see what you are worth, to acknowledge your power to stimulate and inspire whatever faculties I have—to know what you might be worth to a man of highest genius——"

"It is flattery, gross flattery, and I will not have it," she interrupted with burning cheeks.

"And it is real tragedy and no trifle to lose your help—still more your society——"

"I thought we were speaking of my part and Mrs. Ashberry's in the Rag," she said gently. "We are both sorry, very sorry, to have to give it up; but in any case we must do so for a time; and, that being so, it is better to give you the freedom of securing some other permanent help."

"But why—why must you give up the Rag?"

"Well!" a long sigh and more hieroglyphics drawn on the paper; "I have to go abroad for an indefinite time. My father wants me to take him to Norway—he has been ill, as

you know. So I have to leave poor Mrs. Ashberry, as well as the Rag, in the lurch; and, as she will have to do all my work in addition to her own, both halves of Millie are put out of action. In the meantime—and this may mean many months, according to my father's health, and he is not young and has seen service—you should have a free hand on the Rag——"

"I don't want a free hand, I want yours," he burst out imperiously, starting up and pacing the room like a hungry tiger; "I want you—only you. Think what it will be for me to be cast off after all the beautiful moments, the golden hours, you have given me in this sweet room. Easy enough for you——"

"No," she caught her breath; "not so easy. Never think that I don't care. They were beautiful moments for me too——"

He left his angry tiger-pacing and seized her hands in both his, pressing them furiously.

"Not?" he asked, breathing deep and hard, "Sylvia!"

"Why should you think me so unfriendly? Of course I am sorry. Of course I enjoyed the discussions; I was honored by them and the writing; it was a very pleasant and beautiful friendship," she said, looking up with a grave smile.

The crushing hands quivered, the dark, almost fierce eyes deepened. "*Was,* Sylvia?" the deep voice pleaded.

"Is."

She looked him steadily in the eyes, a little tremble in her lips, her voice sweet and low. His hands crushed hers more cruelly, the impulse to clasp her to his heart and press quick kisses on the soft, tremulous red mouth was very strong; but the gentle, reproachful dignity in the clear, unflinching eyes rebuked him and he forbore. The fierce hand-grasp slackened and with a strong, shuddering sigh he bent over the

crushed and reddened hands, shocked at his violence, and kissed them gently and reverently, not passionately.

"Clumsy brute," he sighed. "My great awkward hands hurt you. But you will always be my friend?"

"Why, of course. And will you please occasionally be sensible and not make a fuss about nothing?"

"Nothing? Nothing, when it breaks my heart to lose your help? Because I love you, Sylvia, love you with a good, true love that lifts me above myself and asks nothing in return. Because I loved you with all my soul the first time I saw you in the crowd that night when I was speaking—aye, and spoke better than I ever thought to because of the light in your dear, beautiful eyes——"

"No, George, no—you must not love me, you must not." She rose, turned from him and went to the window, looking out upon the sunny trees and up at the strip of blue sky, as if for help. "You must not say such things. Pull yourself together. It must stop. You have only one love, one sweetheart, and that is your aim, your destined part in life, the thing you are vowed to do, the thing you need all your energies to do."

"I did not mean to speak yet. I was content to be near you. I will not say that I never hoped——"

"You must never hope. You must be free for what is before you."

——"Not yet. And who am I that I should look to you? I that was bred in a poor man's cottage—I that am nothing——"

"Don't say that. It is not true. With your power, your genius——"

"I that have no home fit for such as you. Sylvia, Sylvia, I *have* hoped lately—I have." He pressed nearer her; she went back, putting her hand over her eyes. "But in the years to come when I have won a place and a name——"

again he took her hand, the disengaged one, but gently this time.

"After all, why shouldn't we be happy?" he said, with a sudden reckless change.

"Because," she replied with a little dry sob, taking her hand from her eyes, "there is something better than happiness."

"There is nothing better than being with you. Sylvia!" his eyes dilated and flashed, "you *shall* be mine, you shall, I will make you."

Her eyes flashed now and the tears gathering in them were dashed away. "How dare you? You will do nothing of the kind," she cried. "You can do many things, George Darrell, because you think you can, and you can do many things because you will, and your will is strong; but you cannot make any woman accept you against her will and you cannot make me do anything I do not think fit to do. You are much too masterful."

"You are my queen"—very humbly.

"Nonsense; I am your friend and comrade. That is quite enough."

"*Nothing* more, nothing, darling?" The voice was too pleading, too tender, the outstretched arms too bold.

She turned away. "You are unkind, ungenerous," she faltered; "you take advantage——"

"I am a beast"; the arms fell, the voice was full of penitence; she could have boxed his ears.

But instead of that, she pulled herself together, took a turn in the room and came slowly back, speaking with grave dignity.

"You have a great career before you," she said; "and you know that I am, and always have been, deeply interested in it, and willing to do anything in my power to help you. But long ago you told me that it was your intention to forego

personal satisfaction and—family ties, so as to leave yourself free to concentrate every hope and energy upon the great purpose of your life. And you were right, dear George, quite right. You had all my sympathy, you remember, in that renunciation——"

"I was wrong, quite wrong. I need you for anything I am to do—am nothing, am incomplete without you."

"Didn't we agree that no great thing was ever achieved without sacrifice? Do you remember the sermon in St. Paul's? I, too, had to make a sacrifice, though no great achievement is ever to be mine. I, who am nobody and called to nothing but humble duty. I am to care for my father who needs me. I promised that to my dying mother. It was not easy—but it is good for me——"

"It was wrong; it was not fair. No one has any right to demand such a thing from another. Sacrifice is one thing, fanatic self-stabbing another——" He paused, with a long, deep sigh, looking so dejectedly on the carpet that her heart misgave her. "Quite easy to sacrifice *other* people—and that's what fanatic self-plaguing mostly means. Well, what matter what becomes of me? I was a fool to hope, and a bumptious fool to ask. So it must be as you will," he said more gently, "friendship on your side; on mine—hope or no hope—something far, far deeper."

"No, George, no; that is not fair. You must be free—for that it is best for us not to meet again. But will you please let go my hands?"

"No, no, you must not send your friend away," he cried; "you cannot be so hard. Let me hope. I will hope, Sylvia, Sylvia," he paused, "unless—unless there is another man," he said.

His eyes went through her, searchingly, despairingly; again he caught her hands, pressing them gently to his heart, in a long, breathless pause.

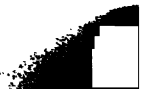
"There will never be another man," she said presently, below her breath, and he knew that the citadel had surrendered, but let the garrison march out with the honors of war.

An hour later he left the house, deeply, gravely, securely happy, as never in his life before, with all that great, unused capacity for happiness that was not the least enviable of his many gifts. He saw himself at the summit of his ambition, the height of his achievement, he called it, and not alone. Sylvia's love was the decree of Heaven, whose chosen instrument he was. With that stimulus he was capable of anything.

"But why," he asked later, "why go to such an unearthly place, where there is no getting at you? How am I to exist? It is quite wrong; if it were only Switzerland and one could get a few days off, it might be put up with."

But the parting was inevitable. The general was going to Norway because it was the only place safe from the pursuit of Mrs. Mostyn, who was known to prefer instant death to the possibility of sea-sickness, and Sylvia was to take him off at once before he fell into the clutches of the anxious wife, whose own convalescence had been far too rapid and complete for family peace and content. And in the case of a recovery, none knew better than that man of frail purpose that all prospect of a pleasant and bracing change of air was at an end for him. But Sylvia told George that it was for the sake of the midnight sun, and neither of them remembered that this phenomenon was nearly two months off. And Millie was to be resumed later on. And no one was to know of any change in the relations between them. If both were in the same mind when George was able to offer a suitable position, he was to claim her, not before.

"And I know one whose wishes will never change," he said, when what he called the most glorious hour of his life ended and he was obliged to go. And Sylvia, humbly proud



and gently, yet passionately, glad both in winning and being won by the splendidly-gifted and supremely fascinating man she knew she had always loved in the depths of her heart, smiled softly and thought that she knew another.

CHAPTER III

EVER since the days when he used to vibrate between chambers in the Temple and friends' houses, and in the former fared so far from sumptuously that he fell into an illness due to prolonged short commons, Lord Wycherley had spent Christmas at Deerham, latterly accompanied by his sister. This year the party was increased by the welcome addition of her secretary, whose summer tour in Norwegian fiords with her father had brought her into great health and beauty, in her friends' opinion.

"Let us *all* go touring in Norway," Lord Amberwood said, looking so long and so earnestly at Sylvia through his pince-nez when they said good-night that she remonstrated; "if it makes people look like this."

"There seems to be more of her," he explained to his wife afterwards, when asked what "like this" meant; "she has come into fuller bloom; she seems more sure of herself; she is full of a sort of proud happiness. She was always charming and inclined to be a pretty girl, now she may really be called a beautiful woman. There's a look of conscious restrained power in her."

"Oh! Is that a sign of beauty? No wonder the poor girl colored uncomfortably when you leveled your glasses so fiercely at her tonight, if you were taking her to pieces like that, Gerald. She is no longer a girl, certainly. She must be nearly thirty."

"My dear, the pity of it is that she is so near thirty and still a girl. I only hope she has not been waiting for Hugh.

There must have been something to keep that lovely and fascinating creature single so long."

"Good sense, for example. You know she was always fond of her own way and always would have it in a quiet fashion. So who was to hinder her from single happiness? I only hope Hugh has not been waiting for her all these years."

"A man is different. Male celibacy needs no explanation. Marriage is a career for a woman, and an accident or a duty for a man. That is a nice girl of Harrington's, don't you think?"

"Well, I don't think Hugh does. But accident in that quarter would not be entirely unfortunate for him, of course. They are made of money. She's a good girl, well enough to look at and quite presentable. But—oh! my dear man—but——"

"Just so. There's more in Hugh than people think, Evelyn, deep down, and it's coming out. He has a career before him. Waytansey confessed the other day to Lisfearne—he makes these little confidences, you know, *in vino veritas*—that Hugh is the only man among the young lot that he is afraid of. But Providence, he explained, has given the Liberals a counterpoise in—guess whom? You can't? Why, George Darrell, the great Darrell, of course."

"That shooting star? My dear, there can be no parallel. Darrell is going up like a rocket; he will explode and fizzle out in the same way. But Hugh—yes; Hugh certainly is a, or the, *coming* man. That Commission gave him a lift."

"Or he lifted the Commission. That was a solid business, dear, thanks to Hugh, who was really, though not nominally, responsible for it, and who made it a real and thorough thing, and also did much of the drafting of the Bill based on it, and the piloting of it through the House. One of the most beneficent and far-reaching measures of social reform ever

passed, I suppose, but as it is a Conservative measure nobody ever cackles or crows over it."

"Well, she'll be here to luncheon and I hope on horseback—it suits her so well—and who knows?" Lady Amberwood sighed, her thoughts having migrated from Hugh's parliamentary, to his domestic, prospects with a velocity peculiar to the feminine intellect.

"Yes; he has a career before him and I should like to see a Mascott at the old place again," said the mere man, his thoughts still unmoved from the larger topic.

Miss Harrington did come to luncheon, a pink-cheeked, clear-eyed girl in the first blush of youth, her slim figure and fair hair well set off by riding dress, which that year still retained some of its traditional neatness and grace and showed neither boot nor spur, as in these floppety days of wide, short skirts and nondescript hats. She possessed a mid-Victorian mother, who would have fainted at the thought of a daughter riding astride.

It was a mild but not rainy season of soft sun-gleams and clear, still air, such as occasionally comes before the January storms; the silver and glass on the luncheon table and the bright hair of some of the guests was touched by the sunshine streaming through tall, unblinded, southwest windows and giving to Maude Harrington's fresh comeliness, and the flowers, holly and every color in the room, their fullest value.

Hugh had arrived unexpectedly on Christmas morning, hardly preceded by a telegram attributing his changed plan to a two days' leave and attractive weather, a change his family hopefully ascribed to the prospect of meeting the Harringtons, but really due to another lady's unhoped-for presence at Deerham, tidings of which had reached him by chance. But it was not so much by chance, as in response to an invitation, dispatched on receipt of Hugh's telegram by

special messenger to her residence some miles away, that Miss Harrington and her father finished a morning canter over the downs by lunching at Deerham Place on Boxing Day. Violet, with her husband and babies and a brother or two, was among the guests staying in the house, and, though the party at luncheon was necessarily large and informal and augmented by one or two thrown-out laggards following the hounds, care had been taken to place the two young people side by side, with the result of many observations but no conversation between them. Mr. Harrington had recently bought the fine property with its spacious Jacobean house of weathered brick in which he was now living and on the site of which he contemplated building a much larger and more pretentious mansion. He came of gentlefolk, of a family that had given distinguished soldiers, judges, divines, scholars and men of science to the country; but he had not distinguished himself at all, except by becoming enormously rich, nobody quite knew how. His father, beginning as a soldier, ended as a substantial merchant. His son added coffee plantations to the Ceylon business, and was said to have made great and successful speculations on the Stock Exchange; but in any case Spencer Harrington was undoubtedly rich, and his only child was undoubtedly pretty, carefully educated, properly presented and brought out, a finished specimen of careful and decorous upbringing. Her mother, an excellent creature with a natural and righteous hatred of many of the ideals of twentieth-century female youth, had openly thanked Heaven that her child had no ideas in her head, a fact that considerably depressed Lady Amberwood, who, knowing that Maude was a great catch, hoped her mother was mistaken.

Lady Amberwood looked wistfully at the young pair sitting side by side in the sunshine in smiling chat, and tried to think them a suitable and handsome couple, Hugh, with that grave, distinguished air he had developed lately and his look

of quiet intellectual forçe, contrasting well with fair-haired Maude's youthful and unawakened blonde prettiness. "Who knew how that waxen character might be molded by life and a resolute mother-in-law?" she mused. "No vice there," she confided to Sylvia, who agreed with both mothers that there was the making of a good wife in the heiress—"for the average man," she thought.

But Sylvia did not consider Hugh an average man, and her estimate was shared by Lord Lisfearne, also by the then leader of the Liberal party.

"It is just because he appears to be nothing out of the common that he is so dangerous," that keen observer said; "everybody trusts him and is off guard with him. Because he is solid they think him stolid, and because he makes no pretension they think he will go with the ruck and never take the bit in his mouth. Because he is not pedantic they think he knows nothing, a typical Englishman and nothing more. But wait and see."

But Hugh's parents had no desire to wait for their son's achievement, still less for his marriage, which ought, if properly contrived, to set him far on the road to success. And as Spencer Harrington, a good steady Unionist M. P., was not without political influence, that, added to the other advantages, made it really appear as if a marriage with his daughter must be of the celestial origin attributed to ideal unions. Thus the perpetual ripple of laughter, that accompanied the light badinage of which Hugh's chat with his fair neighbor consisted, gave the greatest satisfaction to the relatives of both.

"So the great strike is over at last," Mr. Harrington said, setting down his glass with an air of absolute physical and mental content; "what an influence that young man has on the laboring classes. The People's Man, they may well call him. He has but to lift his finger and they follow. An-

other Uncrowned King, but made of more solid stuff than Parnell."

"He should have lifted his finger before it came to sending soldiers," somebody said.

"I don't know what an uncrowned king's prerogative may be," Lord Lisfearne returned; "but it is not usual to stone popular sovereigns, and there is no doubt that George Darrell had a very narrow escape from the mob's violence. If he got off with a broken arm and a cut in the head it was entirely due to his presence of mind and bold and apt speech. He didn't mince matters, told them they were cowards—the meanest kind of skunk, was the expression—and powder and shot was too good for them. When a man says those things in the face of a mob that has broken a limb for him and left him only one hand to wipe the blood from his eyes with that he may glare at them, while a squadron of soldiers is making ready to fire on him from behind, it makes an impression—of some kind."

"It made them ashamed of themselves," came in a woman's soft and liquid voice from the far end of the table, and Lord Lisfearne turned to look in Sylvia's bright-eyed and pale face.

"Ah! by the way, Miss Mostyn, you know him rather well, I think?" he said.

"I contribute to one of his papers."

"We all know him here," Lord Amberwood said, "and are proud of him as a Deerham man."

"And I claim him as my especial friend from a small boy," said Hugh, "though I hate his politics. There never was a pluckier chap. He doesn't know what fear means. But, Mr. Harrington, the height of Darrell's achievement was that he persuaded and satisfied the masters as well as the men, and brought the strike to a happy end. And it wouldn't have ended at Coalville. The whole industry would have been

out in a few days, and all the allied trades would have followed."

The pallor left Sylvia's face, a soft flush suffused it and a still flame lit her eyes, while she listened to a pæan chorused in honor of the People's Man. A great national calamity had been averted by his courage and address. He knew the people to their heart's core; they trusted him; he might lead them anywhere. He had every quality necessary for a leader of men. His non-parliamentary speeches were models of terseness, vigor and eloquence; his readiness and resource in debate inexhaustible. His one defect was his socialist radicalism. Times were democratic and Labor ministers not unknown; who could tell what a firebrand this strong character and gifted intellect might prove? Might there be a Labor premier with a socialist ministry?

Lord Amberwood said no. The wildest socialist and ultra-radical doctrines evaporate in the crucible of practical application. A man cannot long be a minister without learning the hollowness of these sophistical principles; an observation that went home to Sylvia, who had been learning much in her more intimate and frequent discussions with George since their engagement, and more than once had questioned the soundness of his principles, political and social, and begun to change her own.

When the guests were gone and the short afternoon began to close in, there was a family move to the village, where Lady Amberwood's Christmas-tree was to be lighted and stripped for the village children. Had George been one of those? she wondered, while helping to deal out the toys and sweets to the flushed, expectant children round the glittering tree, and was more amused than surprised to hear that his misdeeds had more than once excluded him from that innocent revelry.

Hugh, who had walked with Sylvia and others of the

Deerham party by the short way over the downs to the school, was much questioned on the same topic: Who lived in Dan Grinham's cottage now? Who kept the Wellands' shop? Where had Hugh and the keeper found George poaching?—since it was understood that interest in George Darrell formed part of the bond between them. But though they were the rearguard of the party, lingering along the cliff-edge alone together, an unusual taciturnity and abstractedness on the part of Hugh made his answers disappointing, till they reached Deersleap Cliff, and stopped, looking over the cold, gray waste of water touched to a warm rose in the misty west, where a red ball was sinking slowly behind a burnished sea-rim. Gulls flew out and hovered over the sea, with their desolate and moaning cries, and a lad tramping heavily down the lane on the land side, going home from his turnip-cutting, was singing the carol:

"When the crimson sun had set
Low behind the wintry sea,"

else there was no sound but the sea's low murmur on the shingly beach. Hugh kicked some pebbles from the turf edge and they listened for the splash far below.

"There I hung, just there and the tide was full," he said. "I by my hands, but George by his feet."

"But how could he imagine such a thing?" she asked.

"Oh, they hang like that, bird's-nesting and samphire gathering. But no other fellow would have had the coolness and quick wit to do as he did that day. In the nick of time. Do you know how a numbness comes when the muscles give way? My fingers were opening, my arms loosening, my feet, dug into the cliff, were nothing but a mass of darts and stings, when I heard the quick thud of his feet over the turf and his shout to hold on, and the darkness cleared from my eyes and I set my teeth and held on—I don't know how—

and he shot down out of the sky head foremost and roped me, and—here I am—thanks to George."

They looked down the dizzy steep, over the crumbling edge where the two boys had hung, to the moaning surf and darkening sea, Sylvia silent in a deep, proud emotion.

"And there was George the other day," he said, as they turned and hurried on, "facing the brutes who had put the women in front of them to shield themselves while they stoned the soldiers. Reginald Wynne, who was on duty that day, said in the smoking-room just now that the order to make ready had already been given and the C. O. had opened his mouth for the 'Fire,' when Darrell darted between the mob and the soldiers, and began hustling the women and children away out of danger. That it was that drew the stones on him and broke his arm and cut his head—the cads said he was shot by the troop—and his standing there, facing the mob with his back to the soldiers, that made the C. O. hold the order to fire, which was never given. Can't you see George, our splendid George, dashing the blood from his face, with his broken arm hanging, and gladness and a proud, dangerous look in his eyes? He likes to be in a tight place. One or two fellows anticipated the order and a couple of shots were fired behind him without effect. And there he stood, slanging the brutes and bringing them to their senses, taking as much notice of stones and brick-bats flying round him, as if they had been rose-leaves. That is a man, Sylvia."

"And hurt, terribly hurt—his right arm," she said, with a little gasp. "And all alone now. Trained nurses? Yes; but a suffering, helpless man wants friends' faces about him, people who care for and understand him——"

"Most men—I, for instance. But not George. He is above those weaknesses."

"Ah, you don't know him," she said. She felt her heart throbbing against a left-hand scribbled letter from a hospital,

that sighed for a moment's sight of her face or two words in her voice to heal him.

"Don't I?" he laughed. "Don't I know George Darrell? Well, I saw him sitting propped up, scribbling with his left hand and as jolly as a sand-boy the day before yesterday, the pet of all the nurses and getting well faster than they can believe. Heart of oak he is."

The school-house windows glowed warmly through the dusk when they reached it and were swallowed up in its bright light and miniature Babel of voices and laughter. Hugh, scolded by his mother, looked dazed in the twinkle of candles on the tree; he handed the prizes to the wrong people, and forgot names familiar from infancy and generally seemed to have left his wits behind; but he apologized so pleasantly, with such happy mingling of friendliness, enjoyment and respect of persons, that he failed to please none, still less his lady friends, who ascribed this abstracted condition to the gentle madness of love.

"I saw her face when he helped her into the saddle," Lady Amberwood murmured to Sylvia. "It is all right. Pity there was no opportunity for a formal proposal—thanks to her tiresome John Bull of a father, who would give his head for it. But they understand each other. No match for *him* —but good to look at and at least knows how to come into a room and when to hold her tongue. And though an heiress, she has the sense not to be American."

The tree stripped of its fruit still twinkled; piles of cake and fortresses of bread and butter disappeared before the crowd of happy, bright-eyed youngsters; the shepherd-boy from the downs, his face shining with soap and his smock exchanged for a Sunday coat and stiff collar, stood with the choir and led the children's carols,

"When the crimson sun had set
Low behind the wintry sea,"

and Sylvia discovered with pleased excitement that the elderly villager to whom she had been talking was the mother of Susie Welland, and still kept the village shop and remembered George Darrell and his grandparents.

"A girt hearty boy like he was too much of a handful for a wold 'ooman like she, I reckon. Growed up a personable man and well-thought on and in the Parliament and all, they do say."

A clear Christmas moon, not far from the full, hung halfway up the sky when the Deerham Place party left, and Sylvia wanted little persuasion to walk back the cliff way in the still, night beauty that inspired silence and reverie. George had often climbed that down-path, and well he loved the scent of trodden turf and sea breath, the muffled sound of breaking surf on the shore below, the fitful tinkle of sheep-bells, the shimmering path that led so far over the waves to the moon, and the recurrent rival flash sweeping the broad sea from the lighthouse tower, and all the glory of silvery stars crowding into the pale, moonlight-flooded sky above. Perhaps he was thinking of it now.

"It is a sacred place," Hugh said, pausing as in the sunset on the cliff's edge, and she pictured the scene of that summer day—George, as Hugh described him then, like Andrea del Sarto's young St. John, with that far-off look of innocent boldness and prophetic sadness; Hugh as the clear-eyed average English boy she remembered. "So here I wish to tell you——" he paused.

"What I have already guessed," she supplied. "Much happiness, dear Hugh. Everybody will be delighted—except Jim, who will be sure to make a moan at your not choosing a beggar-girl out of the gutter. She is a very lucky girl."

"She? What do you mean? Who?"

"Why, Maude Harrington; please forgive——" she broke off, confused by the blank amazement in the face.

"What a mistake. There has never been any such thought," he said rather sadly.

"But there might be. They all wish it. She is all your wife ought to be. And you know you really ought to marry now."

"I know that and I should like above all things to do so. But there are two people who wish no such match as that, Sylvia—that lady and I. How could you imagine such a thing, knowing me all these years? Sylvia!"

She turned white and the pain in his voice cut her to the heart.

"I thought I knew," she faltered.

"Have you forgotten that sunset on the mountain convent above Mentone, and all that passed between us that afternoon?" he asked.

"I hoped, I was certain that *you* had," she said in a faint voice.

"The man and woman carrying water-barrels up the mule-path—the little, poor house with the vine-pergola—the poverty and the beauty, the cruel toil and the soft, kind climate—and the great aim—that, beginning then, has bound us together ever since, the aim to better the lot of the world's day-laborers?" (She had not forgotten, but it was to George, not Hugh, that it bound her.) "Have you forgotten? I told you then that I loved you and should love you forever."

"And I told you it could never, never be."

"You were so young."

"And you still younger. I am so sorry, Hugh, so deeply grieved—I scarcely took it seriously. A generous impulse, a boyish fancy, stifled in its birth; so it seemed to me. And I have never since given it a thought and you have never given a sign."

"Yet we have been gradually growing together all these

years. And no other man has come—or seemed to come—into your life. It seemed unfair to speak again while I was unable to marry. But now—think what you might do for me; it is not the worst lot for a woman to help a man to play his part in life—a part he could never play without her. Dear Sylvia, you know what my aims and ambitions are. I think you know every thought in my heart; you may know, too, that my part may be a brilliant one—one that you, better than any woman, are fitted to fill. All your interests are in public affairs, I think, and all your gifts and talents fit you to shine there. And you might be happy. Dearest, friendship, the true friendship, the perfect comradeship you have always given me is not the worst foundation for marriage. And as for love," he smiled and paused, "there is plenty of that and to spare on my part."

Sylvia's heart was torn; he had taken her hands just as George had, only more gently, with a firm, warm pressure but without the fierce passion with which George had crushed and hurt them. She could not speak; tears scalded her eyes and blotted all the serene, moon-glamoured beauty of the night. A tenth wave, plunging in on the rising tide, rolled in with a thunderous boom through an echoing cave in the cliff. Such a thunder-roar had seemed his death-knell to Hugh's fainting sense that day when the welcome shout of George rushing up the path with the rope saved him.

"Give me hope here," he said with a deeper tenderness, "here where George gave me life. Be my friend, my comrade, and my inspiration, loved, honored and cherished as long as we both shall live."

He could not see her face, turned away and shadowed by her hat, but he felt the quiver of the hands she tried to loose from his clasp; through the silence he heard the long, soft roll of the moonlit sea and the tremulous vibration of the hour floating up from the church clock, then a faint sob.

"Sylvia," he sighed, trying to gather her to his heart, all his love and longing in his voice.

She drew back and put his hands away, controlling herself in a strange fear of being mastered by his strong feeling and her own regret.

"Dear Hugh," she said, "all this good love must go to a younger, more suitable woman."

"There is but one in the world for me," came in the grave, steady voice. "Don't let all the good days of life slip by, Sylvia. I have waited nine years. I shall wait nine more if necessary. I shall never give up unless there is another man," he added after a pause and a long sigh.

"Ah! but there is."

He started as if struck. "And you never told me," he cried.

"It is between ourselves"—that *ourselves* cut deep. "There may never be a marriage."

The world seemed to have moved from its place; the soft roll of the silvered sea had a stifled cry in it; a dimness had fallen over the stars and the glistening fields. He turned and looked upon the wide loneliness of moving water with a feeling of outrage and betrayal.

"Dear Hugh," she said, "I always longed to tell you. I wanted your sympathy. But I had to promise him."

"You had to promise whom?" he asked sharply.

"George," she sighed, and the name was like a caress, tremulous, passionate, almost remorseful.

"George?" he echoed, "George?" Another wave plunged thundering through a cave below. He saw, not the soft beauty of the winter night, but the blue and gold radiance of summer afternoon; the hand that gave him back his life then robbed him of happiness today. "George. And he never told me," he said sadly.

The sea-thunder died to a soft murmur, the voice of the

shepherd lad returning from the village came up the down slope clear and sweet:

> "When the crimson sun had set
> Low behind the wintry sea,
> On the dark and still midnight
> Burst a sound of heavenly glee."

"Splendid old George," he said, turning at last with a warm hand-clasp. "But I wish it could be open and above-board."

CHAPTER IV

THE settlement of the Great Strike was a long step in George Darrell's upward climb. It fixed him firmly in the esteem of the Labor party and gave him at least a temporary influence over the trades unions, which he hoped to make permanent, not then realizing what a force he had to contend with. He had even inspired the employers with confidence in his good will, and respect and admiration for the justice, tact and dexterity with which he had handled that thorny dispute, leaning unduly to neither side. The general public was grateful to him for his diplomacy in ridding them of a nuisance fast approaching a national disaster, while people of power and influence of all shades of opinion discerned in him a man of capacity who would probably make his mark in the world. His personal acquaintance and counsel was increasingly sought; collars and cigarettes were named after him, his portrait adorned boxes of sweets.

"And this, dearest," he explained to Sylvia, whom he now saw less frequently than before this rush of engagements, "is the true seal of twentieth-century fame."

But the seal marked a less satisfactory stage of his progress. Already known as president of the Land Tenure Reform Society, of which he was the virtual founder, and virtually, though not actually, leader of the Labor party, he had become too important to have a free hand in politics, and found that the People's Man—as he was generally called—had a master and a hard one, more capricious than a theatrical star, more variable than the winds of heaven.

He had thought to tame this creature, to put bit and bridle upon it and make it carry him whither he would, and

he did not easily renounce this intention, but struggled long and resolutely to carry it out. But with his own eyes he had seen the sons of that wronged and noble and much-enduring Titan, the People, using their wives and children as shields and bucklers against the savage capitalist soldiery they were themselves deliberately stoning, while those same soldiers sat, some of them bleeding, but all, except one who dropped senseless from his horse, immovable as statues; and this gave him a shock from which he never quite recovered, it robbed the cause of its glamour and cast a shade of degradation even over himself. In addition to this, fuller acquaintance with many advocates of the People's rights, certain organizers of, and actors in, processions and indignation meetings; much Park oratory; socialist catechisms, burlesquing Christian dogma, and instilling atheism into young, and even children's, minds; contact with certain demagogues and charlatans who worked upon the weaknesses and took advantage of the ignorance of the class they professed to defend and exalt; these things shook his faith in radical and socialist principles as a moral regeneration; they made him sometimes ask himself whether the classes he loved with such constant devotion might not be better served by a wise curbing than by the extended license he claimed for them, and perturbed him with many troublesome doubts and questionings.

Nevertheless and in spite of all, a happier man than George Darrell was not in all London town during the year following his engagement; each month was full of halcyon days of sunniest peace and charmed intellectual and moral intimacy, with no hint of distant storm. The very secrecy and intermittent nature of the intercourse heightened the pleasure of the meetings with Sylvia, whether public or private. There were early morning strolls in the Park, evening escorts from Settlement *soirées,* club lectures, and political meetings; to Sylvia chance encounters, but by him skilfully contrived and

often purposely involving Mrs. Ashberry's presence. River excursions including both ladies, with a convenient fourth person carefully selected; motor drives to Windsor, Burnham or Hampton Court, furnished exquisite moments of dual solitude; much could be got out of a properly arranged Terrace tea; while Sylvia's coming to the Ladies' Gallery, during a debate in which the People's Man made his first striking speech in Parliament, was a romance of itself, hardly surpassed by her presence at the great demonstration at Queen's Hall in favor of the Liberal Party's revolutionary Land Bill, at which the Premier, the Liberal Leader and the Land Reform President severally delivered epoch-making speeches, referred to and quoted again and again both by promoters and opposers of that measure, which in its then form was not passed.

George had been introduced to General Mostyn as "my friend and editor, Mr. Darrell"; and, though Sylvia had never been able to interest her father in the man who, as he knew well, played such a large part in her working life, till the Strike incident roused the old soldier's curiosity, a few minutes' conversation conquered him and he accepted an invitation for himself, wife and daughter to dine at Prince's, whither Mrs. Mostyn was prevented by some happy chance from accompanying her husband, and where Sylvia succeeded by judicious silence and well-timed interruption to steer the conversation through safe and congenial channels.

But, after an uncomfortable Sunday supper at the Mostyns' house—Mrs. Mostyn never could find a free evening to dine her husband's friends—George put a final veto on Sylvia's reiterated desire to disclose their relations.

"Dearest," he said, in the voice that almost made black white, and certainly turned prose to poetry for the woman who loved him, "I only wish we could. But that would mean telling Mrs. Mostyn, and to tell her would be to proclaim it from one end of London to the other, besides pro-

viding her with another instrument to torment your poor father with."

And this, though she refused to admit the last assertion, was so true and such an evidence of George's power of reading character, that she made no further attempt to move him in that direction.

"Not till marriage is possible," he added, "and that will probably not be till about this time next year, when *we* shall still be in power. Then, if you are still in the same mind, I shall very humbly approach the general and ask his consent—and—Sylvia, it is almost too beautiful to think of."

This was said one lovely summer Sunday evening, while strolling home from the supper with the Mostyns to the house in Piccadilly, which he now entered less and less frequently in the stress of his crowded life. The night, which had closed one of those exceptional days in June that are as clear in the great city as on any countryside, was still and balmy, full of flower scents and fresh with dew; the summer dusk, prolonged after glow to nearly midnight, seemed but a dimmer day seen through a dream's enchantment; the western sky, still tinged with rose on the horizon, was silvery to the zenith, where lessened stars gleamed in pale, sweet magic; the air hummed with the voices and steps of Sunday evening crowds strolling slowly; all ruder sounds were subdued and softened; bells, chiming the quarters from tower to tower, seemed to linger with delight in their own mellowed music in the glamour of the soft night, while trees in the Park and dim, light-pierced masses of palace and mansion round it, looked as unsubstantial and ready to disappear as fairy fantasies.

It was one of the happiest moments of all their intercourse, in spite of the discomfort that had immediately preceded it. They lingered long on their way, each rejoicing in the day's leisure, that was all the sweeter and more restful for the subconsciousness of the great billow of toil ready to

crash upon and carry them away again next morning; it was an unforgettable moment, for it was a long, long time before they spoke again of anything so intimate and so purely personal as their engagement. That was taken for granted henceforth, since their correspondence and the precious, romantic moments of private speech were always full to the brim with the large public interests and impersonal aims that occupied the thoughts and energies of both.

Before the Great Strike George Darrell's most intimate friends, with a few exceptions, had been intelligent artisans, leaders and promoters of Labor movements, supporters of popular educational associations such as University Extension lectures, and officials of workmen's clubs, themselves chiefly working men. But now, upon higher social planes, he began to appreciate the charm of intercourse with men of intellect and superior and more varied culture, and discovered so many deficiencies in himself and so much that was novel and interesting in them as to regret the pride that had moved him to refuse the intimacy of the Deerham Place circle, whom he always suspected of patronage and contemptuous toleration of himself as an outsider. But now that he was a personage and sought with much deference for his acknowledged superiority, that petty pride, of which he had always been secretly ashamed, vanished and the secure confidence in his own high position gave him humility of a kind, while it allowed him to reap the benefit of mixing with all sorts and conditions of people.

In the meantime the *Sunday Visitor,* firmly established and admirably staffed, no longer needed his actual conducting and writing; so with financial help from Jim a more ambitious paper was launched in the form of a weekly review of literature, science and art, and, doubtless because its chief aim was to create prejudice against all that was in the established order of things—though it admitted contributions

of all shades of opinion—it was called *Without Prejudice,* a phrase frequently used by Jim to embody his private views and idiosyncrasies. To think that everything new, and nothing old, is good, was to be without prejudice; for this reason Jim welcomed all young people who tried to write poetry without rime and meter and those painters who ignored perspective, form and color, sadly confessing himself too hopelessy blighted by age to be able to follow in the newest poetic school himself. Yet, with a delightful inconsistency that was not the least of his charms, he still took intense pleasure in reading and reciting exploded Homers, Dantes and Shakespeares, and listening with rapt attention to outworn Mozarts, Beethovens and Handels, Verdis and Tartinis. These depraved tastes he humbly attributed to his personal backwardness in civilization, while he assented to all the raptures showered upon the newest confection of noisy discords and realistic imitation of teething infants, grunting motors and such amenities of our most advanced civilization.

"Slices of life," he termed these with profoundest respect.

George, cheerfully relegating these excursions in criticism to the editors of their respective departments, laughed at them all, and confined himself to general supervision, politics and sociology, on which he wrote powerful articles in every issue. And whereas the Rag had been but a barrel-organ, this was a real three-manualled organ, amply furnished with stops and pedals, he said, and he thundered at will upon his instrument, till the hot water into which his fulminations brought him reduced him to a more discreet and piano style of playing.

The launching and editing of *Without Prejudice* put an end to the pleasant editorial conferences on the Rag; and although Millie, the two-handed, continued to enliven its columns, and Sylvia, anonymously or under another name, was for a short time an occasional contributor to *Without*

Prejudice, that impersonal mode of intercourse between the friends came also to an end and was but indifferently replaced by the interchange of ideas involved in Sylvia's critical reading and subsequent proof-correcting of a volume George published on the condition of the English working classes, called "The Deep Sighing of the Poor," which afforded matter for much diversity of opinion and debate between them, besides incidentally increasing George's reputation and furnishing him with the sinews of war.

This led to further literary and journalistic work, that still further absorbed his time and energy for the next year or two, during which he lived at such pressure of mental and physical activity as almost excluded personal and emotional life and put such a tax on his superb strength as few constitutions can endure, and only those who need little sleep and can take it at odd moments can survive.

"Where's Darrell? What's become of George Darrell?" Jim asked one day, after one of the Wycherley House receptions. "I never see him here now."

"No," Margaret replied. "He is too great a man now. He has shot miles ahead of us little fishes."

"Not too great, too busy," Sylvia said, fancying a tinge of bitterness in Margaret's voice; "he has time for nothing that does not directly forward his work now. They say he does almost without sleep. He has so many irons in the fire."

"After all, the strain of political life at Darrell's pace in addition to his writing must be terrific," Jim reflected; "eminent statesmen, leaders of great causes, must be able to do without sleep. That's one of George Darrell's qualifications as a leader. His splendid physique, the clean, fresh, peasant blood will carry the People's Man through. His friends must not grudge him to the Cause."

Sylvia looked up gratefully in response to this; but her smile, Margaret thought, was wistful and a little enigmatic.

Yet Sylvia always told herself, as the days went on and the spaces between their meetings widened, that it could not be otherwise, that the waiting time would soon be over and that her trust in his faith was as great as her pride and joy in his brilliant achievement. Selfish pettiness to regret that he had outgrown his young dependence upon her; like a weak and silly mother grudging his manhood to her son, instead of rejoicing because she had brought a man into the world.

"Pity she never married," Margaret sometimes lamented, as if all ideas of marriage now belonged to the past. "I always thought she would when the time came. With all that charm and refined beauty. It's not as if she had even a tolerable home."

"She has chosen the better part; she is espoused to ideas," Jim replied, not without a comfortable and thankful assurance that Sylvia's ideas would keep her securely chained to his own hearth.

Margaret murmured that ideas did well enough for widows, but maiden youth wanted something warmer and more substantial.

BOOK IV

THE SYREN VOICE

CHAPTER I

IN a sunset of great beauty and mystery that colored the castle-crowned hills, towered towns, olive and vine-lands and distant mountains of the romantic country in which so many battles of the *Risorgimento* were fought, a crowded train, trailing its foul smoke-banner through the clear, sweet air, shrieked and rattled along the line from Milan to Venice; past the abrupt steep where the castles of the Montagus and the Capulets still frown at each other in immortal enmity; past the broken fortifications of the Quadrilateral, hated symbol of Austrian rule; past the still beauty of Lake Garda with a glimpse of steeper and more rugged mountains leading up to the Tyrol; past the solemn grandeur of Verona, backed by dark blue mountains and dreaming on ancient splendors in the fading light.

George Darrell sat in a corner by the window, all eye and thought, scarcely replying except by a smile or look to the grave and handsome Italian, who spoke such fluent French and had been in England, and was so courteously bent on pointing out every place of interest and telling its association to the Englishman, obviously new to the country and overpowered by its beauty and romance. Solferino—Custozza — San Martino — Desenzano — Sirmione — the very names were poems of epic or lyric charm, and the solemn, purple-shadowed sunset merging in dusk and dark clothed them with another grandeur.

Certainly he must see Verona, if only for the tomb of Romeo and Juliet, and the card promised thence to Sylvia

that would make up for one of those long silences lately creeping into their correspondence.

Dark night hid the approach to Venice and it was difficult to realize that they had crossed the sea, when the train disgorged upon a dimly-lighted platform an impatient, bustling crowd, all vainly shouting in the first language that came handy for non-existent porters and undiscoverable luggage, and all at last compelled by a man in a blouse to follow a hand-lorry, heaped with an indiscriminate medley of unclaimed bags and trunks, through dark windings to the verge of a black water, beyond which high buildings scantily pierced with orange lights loomed dark beneath the stars. Upon this Stygian wave lay a closely-packed mass of black barges, with shining steel beaks at their prows bobbing continually on the liquid darkness, and giving the funeral phalanx a martial and defiant air, heightened by the ensuing half-hour's struggle between passengers trying to rescue their luggage from determined men, who refused to give it up, and shouting for hotels of every name and nationality to vociferating hotel-porters of the same, who obstinately refused to have anything to do with them.

George, forcibly seizing one of these by the collar at last, got himself and his belongings stowed in one of the beaked barges, "black as a funeral scarf from stem to stern," and shouting his address to a silent, shadowy figure towering above and behind him, reclined luxuriously in the uncovered, cushioned lounge that began to glide silently with a gentle and lulling motion over a dark and dream-like water between tall cliffs, vague shadows against the starry sky. Glowing squares of light piercing these walls and casting tremulous gleams across the dark sea, and little gold beads sparkling along the water's edge, gave token that they were no cliffs but marble palaces, churches and colonnades, rising sheer from the sea like some enchantment, and here and there lifting

towers and domes into the dim sky. This slow, mysterious progress against the wind in the glamour of soft, moving shadows due to some unknown power hinted by a light, rhythmic plash from behind, was like nothing earthly; it was rather a spirit voyage through some fairy region of romance and dream. Kit-bags and suit-cases piled with rugs by the silver-beaked prow were to George's fancy an outrage on the beauty and mystery of the hour.

Still as the night was, the gondola's steady glide provoked a back-draught of keen, sweet air that quickened pulses and dissipated discontent; a star shot with a faint silvery trail from the dim, crowded zenith, as if welcoming him to the lonely beauty. The silence was occasionally stirred by a thud on the black bark's quivering side, then a darkness starred with lights would rush panting by with another thud, that was the back-wash of the furrowed water, and the stillness would close back again on air and sea. The dark figure, swaying unseen to the swaying oar in the stern behind, was mute as the grave; Charon of the burning eyes ferrying lost souls across the Styx was not more sullen and uncommunicative. That fine colonnade must be the Fondaco dei Turchi, but Charon's grunt was hard to translate; and that, could that be?—it actually *was*—the confession was forcibly shaken from the sulky ferryman—the Rialto, that tiny toy bridge.

Strange to think how small are the places great with historic association and the destinies of ages; especially strange to minds accustomed to the laudation of multitude and the right of the unthinking and ignorant many to rule the trained and thinking few, minds wearied by the cult of material size that measures the greatness of empires by the ground they cover and of cities by the number and wealth of their population. This little labyrinth of rock-like buildings threaded by sea had been great among great world-powers, the main artery through which the commerce of the middle ages

flowed. On this narrow space a handful of fugitives, scourged from the mainland and anchoring and fortifying themselves in the sandy sea-shallows, founded this city of marble splendor and thence held the world at bay till they became a power in it.

The black barge slid silently away from the Rialto, and, preceded by a long desolate cry ending on a sound more like a German *æ* than any Italian vowel, shot up a narrower thread of water, overhung on each side by mysterious balconies, projecting from dark cliffs that were houses, divined rather than seen in the dim light, and crossed by small, sharply-arched bridges of fairy architecture. Now and again bars of light shot across these sea-lanes from openings in long, dim lines of masonry, places brilliant with street lamps and sometimes shops, and echoing with voices and laughter, sudden mad intrusions of vivid everyday humanity into a silent dream of the poetic past, soon merged again in the gloom.

"You *must* see Venice," Sylvia had said, ages and ages ago, in the days when there was nothing so sweet in all the world as those rare Sunday afternoons at the house in Piccadilly, where one was used to tremble at a smile from clear, golden-brown eyes and the fullness of vital joy had first been tasted.

He was seeing Venice now—but alone. It could not be otherwise. Years were passing, youth waning; Sylvia's life, filled with other interests and other duties, was drifting apart from his. Her last letter, now in his pocket, was old, and certainly it was cold—and it was unanswered. If she were only here, as she should be and would have been had fortune been kinder, side by side and hand in hand with him in the dim and visionary bark on this unimaginable river of agate darkness shot with gold. She was still, in spite of all differences, his highest inspiration and best counselor; but women are unpractical; they will not, or cannot,

compound with the brutalities and necessities of real life. She lived in a moral atmosphere too pure and rarefied for mortal man. But it was not that alone which kept them single and apart.

Two things had befallen George Darrell since his name had been given to shirt-collars and his portrait to boxes of chocolate and cigarettes. He had discovered that a party man, especially if he be a rising man, literally cannot call his soul his own; and even though he may call his newspapers his own, they cannot at the same time be the organs of any party and candidly express his own or any honest individual's principles; the half-broken creature he had undertaken to ride to the winning-post would brook neither bit nor spur; to stick on took all the skill he was as yet master of, to guide or check its wild career might hardly be possible. Politics, he heard privately from fervid and eloquent upholders of sacred causes in public, was but a game; one must use its counters and follow its rules, keeping conscience for private and personal use; one might accept these and play the game, or leave them and do nothing. He decided to play the game.

The second thing that had befallen him was, that many deep-rooted prejudices had withered away and many early theories and principles faded from his mind; yet to these, bound by the exigencies of the exciting game he was playing, he outwardly clung. Was not compromise essential to any livable scheme of life, besides being inherent to all those great institutions that make the English "what they are" instead of what they ought to be? People—other-side people —might call this opportunism; but it was only playing the game. In this way he was dwindling to an ordinary other person, one of the ruck, fallen from his high eminence as a man of spotless integrity and singleness of purpose.

And, though he was climbing steadily and had not forgotten the central, though now confused, aim of his life—

to still the deep sighing of the poor—he knew that the hard, even savage things said of him sometimes were not entirely without justification, though he laughed them off as jaundiced expressions of envy, the invariable penalty of success. It was for that central aim, he persuaded himself, that he refrained from marriage and so kept all his energies free; though an inward voice, chiming with the often-silenced voice of nature, broke out at times in plangent indignation, telling how much better that aim could be achieved in the secure peace of domestic happiness. But he had seen the wives of men who had risen and made early love-matches in their own birth-rank, happy in sequel still, and had been almost as sorry for the wives—dingy little hen-pheasants beside their brilliant gold and crimson lords, unclassed, bewildered, incapable of intellectual interests, dazed by their remoteness from early conventions and disquieted by their exclusion from their husbands' deeper and larger interests—as for the husbands themselves. He had also observed that, when the perennial youth of the man of genius blossoms into successful activity and power of enjoyment, the worn and tired wife drowses in the inert dullness of premature middle-age. Thus, with all his courage, he had been afraid to marry and, with all his penetration and cleverness, had not discovered the difference between a woman of brilliant intellect and gentle nurture and an ordinary, untaught working-class woman.

But where was Sylvia at this moment, the magic of which was incomplete without her? What if, by some beneficence of relenting fate, she were to appear at the end of this fairy maze of narrow lanes paved with liquid agate and spanned by aerial bridges, over which only spirits and creatures of romance should flit—shades of Juliet, Desdemona and Jessica, of dead queens, like Catarina Cornaro, heroic forms of victorious doges and princely painters, like Titian and Veronese, superb in shining armor damascened with gold, clad

in rich and creamy satins starred with gems, and velvets of gorgeous hue. What joy to hear her voice and catch the gleam of her eyes through the gloom!

The thought of Veronese recalled his glowing canvases in the Louvre, and with them a living face of strange, disquieting charm, that had haunted him continually ever since, with a question and a promise in the enigmatic eyes. What magnificence of mold in her figure, what imperial beauty of movement and repose! Not a picture, not a statue, in all those richly filled galleries had anything more superbly lovely than that unknown woman.

Again the prolonged and wailing *ahi!* and the melancholy, long-drawn-out response of *eh-eh!*—all that reached his unaccustomed ear of the gondolier's classic *Stali!* and *Preme!* —and silently, with a long, soft sweep, another gloom-shrouded barge with a dark figure swaying in the stern slipped past by a hair's breadth. If Sylvia chanced to be reclining in that? What a contrast between the grave sweetness and still fire of the face he loved and the superb, almost insolent beauty of the unknown woman in the Louvre.

More sharp, skillful twists of the long gondola round a narrow turning, preceded by the desolate cry, and other openings of light and common life crossing the poetic gloom, and here, over a narrower agate path walled with darker, taller precipices and roofed with brighter stars, is a bridge of heavier make and greater height spanning the trembling water; this, Charon sullenly admitted, under severe compulsion, is the Bridge of Sighs.

And then, "a palace and a prison on each hand," the gondola slid under the blacker shadow of that crime and grief-shadowed structure and out into the broad and lighted lagoon, whence the grayish-white domes of the Salute rose superb against a soft, dark sky and the campanile of San Giorgio shot up among the stars, and where a vast blackness

pierced with many lights indicated an armored battleship at rest on the lagoon, and lines of lights on either hand quivered on the water among various craft moving and still, and Charon, by some mysterious magic in his single oar, compelled the long, dark bark to wind about and finally come to at a flight of broad, shallow steps. Down these came a majestic being with the solemnity of an ambassador receiving a sovereign, followed by a gold-embroidered *concierge,* who whipped the incongruous bags and rugs from the magic bark and disappeared with them across a broad marble terrace into a beautiful medieval palace, entering which, at the instance of the majestic but matter-of-fact host, George made a rapid descent from peaks of dream and romance to everyday prose and very comfortable reality.

Some of the crowd lounging in after-dinner comfort in the fine entrance hall looked up as the handsome milord came in with his calm and masterful air, fresh and hearty from the sea, taking in the whole of the company with one bold, sweeping glance; while some who were English exchanged smiles and some lips silently shaped words that he knew made his name.

The People's Man was easily recognized, a fact that in no way affected or disturbed him. The *Punch* spread by his plate during his solitary dinner had a delightful cartoon of a winged Perseus descending sword in hand to deliver a chained damsel, representing women-laborers, from a ferocious and scaly sea-monster with the clever and sinister visage of the Premier, who had recently shown marked hostility to a measure emanating from the Labor Party and chiefly affecting women, on which during the last election he had bestowed his approval; the face of Perseus was George at his best. It would make a good opening to that long-delayed letter to Sylvia; the well-known lilies-of-the-valley that he wore so often in and out of season in memory of Sylvia's

May morning flowers, were engraved in the armor of Perseus. This cartoon and a sudden plunge into that night's first weird impressions of Venice and his longing for her to share them, would make a charming letter to her, telling everything with no boring preamble of excuse. He had already sent her his last novel of slum life, which would explain much, providing she had received it, which was uncertain, considering her present frequent changes of address while taking relatives about to various health resorts.

What an occupation for George Darrell's future wife, who was to play such a part in society—among other things to revive the old French salon and the lost art of conversation! He was much in society now; many ladies of many ages loved him; the young and unlearned sent him flowers, autograph books and letters, and forgot to take his photograph from under their pillows of a morning; the elder and more staid read all his writings and speeches, echoed his opinions, moved heaven and earth and husbands and brothers to procure him political and social advancement, and gave him considerable sums of money—not always anonymously—when they had it, and begged, borrowed or stole it for him when they had not. It was evident that his wife would have to be a woman of some beauty and social charm and tact, and must entertain and dress sumptuously. Office alone, when he had it, would hardly suffice for these things, which, in some inexplicable way, were to put an end to that "deep sighing of the poor" he still had so much at heart.

Punch and the smaller fry of that kind did not always depict him as a beautiful and chivalrous deliverer of oppressed beauty, but sometimes as a far meaner and more sinister being. An impudent little street urchin had often been his part in earlier days; but whatever pose he was given, his smile was almost always there, and whatever

ridicule, calumny or abuse was heaped upon him from whatever source, his equanimity was never impaired by it—until now, when something had found a chink in his armor and struck him to the heart. Because that something was true—though he denied it to himself.

Someone else denied it in a public print, a cutting of which, as yet unread, was in his pocket with Sylvia's last letter.

He had gone far in stimulating and instilling a hatred he had long ceased to feel for all classes but that from which he sprang, especially for the parson and squire, the dual tyrants of the village, as he had been taught to call them, twin embodiments of the selfish tyranny of their class, whose wealth, ease and social exaltation was based on the labors and privations of the poor, whom they compelled to serve them, with hypocritical perversion of Gospel truth and iniquitous social and political conventions based upon these. Half of this he still believed; the whole he used with secret contempt as the shibboleth of his faction; but now even the credited half, all the more fiercely clung to from fear of personal bias through his friendship with one of the tyrant order, was gradually slipping away from his creed.

Quite recently during the hurly-burly of party battle over disestablishment, some zealous radical, hunting for instances of clerical tyranny, had raked out of old papers the calumny of Mr. Hervey's high-handed proceedings in breaking into the dying preacher's sick-room, shutting out his own people, playing upon his delirious terrors and forcing Church doctrines and rites upon him. A second enthusiast had corroborated this, with the addition that the victim of this ecclesiastical tyranny was the People's Man's own grandfather. George, to whose notice the first story was brought, had judged it best let alone to fizzle out its little spiteful spark. Then some doughty Conservative, looking for

a stone to throw at the People's Man, who was becoming more and more obnoxious to his side, made the whole story the basis of an envenomed attack on George Darrell, and pointed out, in a brief biographical sketch of that gentleman, that it ill became the illegitimate and neglected son of a journeyman tailor's daughter, educated in a church school, and singled out by the village parson for secondary education, which had been financed by the village squire, his life-long protector and support, one of those very peers against whom this demagogue was constantly inveighing; it ill became this man to slander, abuse and hold up to contempt those classes, to the charity of individuals of which he owed it that he was not now a day-laborer at eighteen shillings a week. Many details adorned this sketch. The unwanted, fatherless child, a symbol of family disgrace, ill-treated and neglected, had been protected both by parson and peer. He had been taken into the household of the latter and most kindly treated, and in spite of the insolence and insubordination which made it impossible to keep him there, the tyrannous peer had given the clever, quick-witted boy chance after chance and even offered him a University career, which he had scouted, and finally educated and set him up as a solicitor. This was the man who lost no opportunity of blackening the clergy and land-owning classes and holding them up to ridicule, the man who allowed a calumnious story of the very clergyman who had been a father to him to circulate uncontradicted in the Press.

It was the truth underlying this that struck home. For the first time the People's Man realized, not so much what he owed to Mr. Hervey, whom he had always loved and respected, or to Lord Amberwood, *that* he had always known and felt with deep gratitude; but what he would have been without their kindness—a half-starved outcast probably, for he would have run away to sea.

beaten and kicked to death, at best an officer on a merchant vessel, like his father. He recognized that he was not the man to fling stones at the upper classes, since after all the People's Man was an aristocratic product. Jim could, and did, rail at his order with a better grace; he had been born, not grafted, into that class; besides, his railings were entirely academic. Might not the cause of the People's Man be served by honester means? Must one be bound by the rules of this infernal game? Yes. Only by playing it with courage, craft and skill could such as he be raised to a position to break the yoke from off Esau's neck. One day he would be strong enough to be free, and then he would strike out a bold and honest course of his own. With a deep sigh he sank in the depths of a luxurious piece of upholstery, more like a bed than a chair, beside a little table that held coffee, liqueur and matches, and, after some thoughtful puffs at a cigar of chosen brand and a few sips of perfect coffee, drew the cutting from the letter-case and read his friend's defense of him.

It was a letter fierce with indignation and savage with contempt: personalities aimed at political opponents were described as being vile as they were futile, while no word was strong enough for the vileness of such as were perversions of truth; by the side of these downright lies were holy. The attack on the member for Steelchester, coming from a Unionist, made honest men ashamed to call that party their own. There was a brief statement of the real circumstances of Dan Grinham's death and George Darrell's birth and breeding, with warm appreciation of the latter's character, capacity and single-hearted devotion to the great aim of his life. If friends had been privileged to help him to a better training than was usually given to village boys, the letter ran, his genius and industry had more than justified them in doing so and had already raised him to a political eminence

rarely reached at such an early age, and a place and power without parallel in the hearts of millions. "I share his aims," the writer concluded, "though I hate his politics and have always and openly opposed them; but I never knew a better or truer man or one less liable to be swayed by personal considerations; I owe more to him personally than will ever be known, and I have known him intimately since we were boys." The letter was signed Hugh Mascott, and dated Deerham Place.

So that was what Hugh thought of him. It made him hot with humiliation. And that was what Hugh thought of party abuse and all the mean and vulgar tricks of the game in which he was himself winning and bound to win more and more. But Hugh had held good cards from the first. He was not obliged to stoop to these things. He was born high up and had no need to climb to a secure footing. Besides, there was but one Hugh, or could be, in the whole wide world. Splendid Hugh!

But Hugh could never be the real friend of the People, much less their deliverer. He was not of them and had not lived among them and shared their privations, had not even tried for a time the life of a laborer, living on his wage from day to day, like Adrian Bassett, the founder of the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule. Hugh could never realize that the toilers were grown men in full possession of their faculties, reasoning beings, not children of a larger growth, undeveloped, unthinking creatures of impulse, led by instinct and unstable as reeds. No doubt he really loved them—had he not made one of them his chief friend?—but his surface, dilatory methods could never help what could only be attained by an absolute overthrow and rebuilding of the whole structure. The People could only attain full manhood with the enjoyment of all its rights, above all of its special right to rule, as the most numerous. Hugh

was still in the house of bondage, fettered by his Conservative principles and aristocratic traditions.

He finished his cigar, marked the *Punch,* addressed it lazily with a fountain pen, and, reaching out for some stationery on a little writing-table near, caught the gleam of the white shoulders of a lady who was talking with animation to a small group sitting opposite him on the other side of the hall. Her face was turned from him; but he saw that she had magnificent and beautifully arranged hair of warm gold, and was dressed in the newest, most *chic,* style. The gleam of her splendidly molded arms, bare from shoulder to wrist, filled him with agitation; his eyes dilated and glowed; he did not observe that she was too much dressed for the occasion; he would not have had it otherwise, yet it troubled him. The poise of her head, with its gemmed coronal of red-gold hair, her figure and bearing, suggested thoughts of lovely ladies and queens long dead, for whom kings had died and gallant blood been spilled. So that Cyprian queen might have received homage and dispensed favor. A descendant, no doubt, of some historic family, a daughter of doges, splendid in the splendid setting of this city of marvel and beauty.

He spread out the sheet of paper, wrote the date and looked up again. The group had risen; a man among them was holding a rich evening coat, lustrous in the glare of a Venetian glass pendant above them; the lady turned and slipped into it, facing George, and catching his eye with a quick but as quickly veiled flash of recognition that made the blood beat in his pulse; for it was the face that had haunted him ever since he first saw it in the Louvre.

Yes; it was she, in warm, living reality, in her statuesque beauty, fascinating and mysterious, lofty and aloof. He saw her close and clearly, sweeping slowly past him with her friends, her dress brushing his feet, entirely unconscious of

him, and apparently only half conscious of the man at her side who was talking to her with a powerful American accent. George heard him say something about a gondola, and the lady, turning to catch what he was saying, tucked a handkerchief ineffectually into a fold of the gorgeous coat, so that it escaped and floated gently to George's feet.

Quick as cat on mouse he pounced upon, seized and presented it, in the usual devotional attitude, with some murmured conventionality, rewarded by a gracious surprised smile and word of thanks that raised him to the skies.

The American turned with lifted eyebrows and a smile that consigned the Englishman's impudence to perdition; the lady pressed her handkerchief to her lips—cautiously and with a quick glance to see if the red had come off on the cambric—and murmured something to her cavalier as they passed out into the open Riva, of which George's quick ear caught, or thought to catch, the words "honor" and "People's Man," as he slid behind them, and, leaning on the velvet ledge of the open window, watched the party cross the broad pavement and disappear into a gondola that vanished in the darkness.

The letter, which had arrived at the word "Dear," went no further that night.

CHAPTER II

AFTER the first shock of bewildered admiration, the restful charm of the city of silent waterways was very grateful even to a mind of such volcanic energy and varied capacity as George Darrell's, and too full of romantic and historic suggestion to be boring. The recent unusually prolonged session had been a severe tax upon human endurance—all-night sittings of unintermitted battle, including one of thirty hours' duration, week-ends and half-days consumed at uproarious and excited political meetings, demonstrations, processions and skirmishes, in which the People's Man had not always been in strict harmony with the police. These things were without, in the world's eye; but within were struggles and fightings even more trying, centering in two leading points: the advisability of accepting office, or becoming Leader of the Labor party, either or both of which courses would undoubtedly be his to choose before long.

Even the clean peasant blood of which Jim had spoken, and George's splendid power of endurance were beginning to feel the accumulated strain of the last few years, and the few weeks already spent in what he called "idly looking round Europe" were not enough to recruit his jaded energies. Not only to rest from effort but to receive new and recreative impressions was what he needed, and one can do this easily by gliding in gondolas over Venetian waters and most easily with pleasant and tactful companions, as good to look at as any gothic-arcaded palace or golden sunset on the Grand Canal. George did it so easily that in a few days all that happened before that first starlit voyage

of enchantment through the winding, bridged sea-ways was as if it had never been. Charon had ferried him across that dark water to another world, where there was neither parliament, newspaper, nor political and mental strife.

He did not, however, fail to pen a brief but forcible comment in acknowledgment of Hugh's letter. This comment, which appeared in his own journal, and that of the biographic sketch and Hugh's letter, expressed a sad wonder that class or any other hatred should be attributed to such a well-known lover of his kind as himself, and asserted that not only recognition but reproof of defects was consistent with the warmest affection. Things uttered in the heat of strife and debate were often exaggerated and liable to misinterpretation; they should not be taken too literally or without context, as had been done by the writer of the sketch. No one cherished a warmer regard or higher appreciation for all that was admirable in the class from which, as had been truly said, he himself had received many inestimable benefits; such feelings could not blind, but rather made right-minded people more sensitive to defects. The silence that means contempt was the best answer to such virulent attacks as that to which the writer of the "vigorous and manly, though too generous, letter" had called his attention; but he had decided to break his rule of ignoring such trivialities in this case, if only to set seal to the apt and generous comment of an incomparable personal friend and chivalrous political foe, and express his deep gratitude to and cordial regard for those he had been accused of vilifying.

This task accomplished, every moment deepened the fascination of the city that rises like an enchantment from the sea she dominates and defies in her age-long calm. Even the armored warship, sitting black and grim on the quiet water, seemed rather a phantom from a rough and turbulent outside world than a reality; and the barracks in the little

flagged court, entered by a beautiful archway at the back of the hotel, a sort of toy house where people played at soldiering in pleasant Gilbert-and-Sullivan mockery of an absurd and obsolete world; while the long-drawn, plaintive notes of a bugle that were dying in dulcet sadness, as they sounded *Silenzio* or *Last Post* on that first Venetian night, had the solemn sweetness of the innumerable church-bells, that are always taking melodious counsel together across the waters of Venice; their musical call promised the soldiers something better than the nightly rest they sang.

But that night thoughts of rest were far from George, even when he had finished his duty correspondence and the hall was emptied of all but the last wearied waiter, hovering impatiently near to put out the last light and extinguish George's hope of the reappearance of the haunting face from the Louvre in the doorway. He lay long awake, listening to the bells and the occasional shouts of laughter from workmen coaling steamers on the wharf and tormented by the mingled attraction and repulsion of the beautiful, sinister face that haunted him; and it was not without relief that he came to the conclusion in the morning, after a breakfast with no sign of her, that the Lady of the Louvre was but a chance diner at the hotel and would probably be seen no more.

So that ghost was laid and she disappeared from his thoughts till the afternoon, when he was standing in the Piazza in the glowing gold of Italian sun, tracing out the details of the deep-recessed, slender-columned porches of St. Mark's and wondering at the lavish luxury of their colored marbles and mosaics. Not white—Ruskin's enthusiastic picture of the superb front having left a general impression of masses of snowy foam and mounting billows upborne by winged white steeds, the reality was a disappointment—but a moment's disappointment was more than compensated for by

the glory of richly-colored façade, pinnacled arch, swelling dome and gold-winged angel on a background of clear and radiant blue, and the splendor of those golden Grecian horses, that veritably seem to be springing from out of the church and pawing the air in their upward flight. What scenes must have been before those horses in their unresting course through the centuries; what imperial splendor of Venetian, Byzantine, Roman, perhaps Grecian, dominion! A bizarre, yet beautiful idea to plant them there over the chief portal of the magnificent church. What a people this was, that would neither yield to the brutality of the barbarian nor sink in the waters into which he had driven them, but on the foundation of shifting sea sands built a marble city, an indestructible fortress, to be the center of a world-power and the home of one of the richest schools of modern art. What a people!

And what majestic young goddess was this, crowned by her own rich masses of hair, wearing a fringed black shawl like a regal robe, and walking so proudly through the clouds of pigeons rising iridescent before her and circling about the bronze sockets of the three giant flagstaffs that once held the banners of the subject states? Only a Venetian work-girl, but of true Illyrian descent. And with the same regal carriage comes a brown-faced peasant woman, a brightly-colored shawl on her head; and here is a monk, bearded and tonsured; and here a soldier, gallant and gay; children of every class, and everywhere people from the ends of the earth. The city's sacred birds, flying like living jewels from the jeweled portals, take tribute of grain and homage from admiring hands, or descend in feathery clouds on the shoulders of some chosen courtier, like this fair-haired girl from the North, the envy of children clustering round. So they used to settle on Sylvia, he remembered, and picked up a feather to send her in a letter. Those domes, as she said,

were visibly rising into the blue sky, like some glorious emanation from the sea. Where was Sylvia, who should be here, where everything spoke of her and they had planned to spend their first married days? Away with this folly and waste of waiting. Why not take the first train back to England and with special license marry and bring her here at once? "I want you, Sylvia, want you, want you, am stupefied, maimed and hollowed out with longing to have and to hold you once and forever!" But the Piazza is empty and soulless, and the domes rise into an alien sky of pitiless, cloudless clarity.

And what is this that brings back last night's feverish unrest? The pigeons are rising, dividing and floating away, before a lady of regal carriage, crossing the square to the great clock-tower, where the bronze Moors are coming out with lifted axes to strike the hour upon the bells. As she passed in the clear light she lowered her delicate silk sunshade and disclosed the face of the Lady of the Louvre.

George's heart gave a violent throb; he wondered whether he most admired or hated the attractive, repellent face with its aloof, mysterious gaze, that seemed to see nothing before it, as slowly, with a careless grace, she walked across the sunny marble and turned under the arcade of the *Procuratie,* stopping at one of the gorgeous shops full of costly nothings, spread as baits to foreign extravagance. He turned away, vexed and disquieted; the dream and the longing were desecrated, the peaceful charm and sunny beauty disturbed. He lingered along the Piazzetta, where a line of blue lagoon cut across the tall and lonely columns bearing the lion and the tortoise, and a fleet of gondolas was moored ready for hire. Then something turned him back and drew him, reluctant and helpless, to the tower, where the bronze Moors had hammered their last stroke,

and planted him outside the goldsmith's shop, into which the lady had disappeared.

Presently he went in and asked in John Bull French for something in the window. The maddened shopman tore his hair and persistently misunderstood him in a Venetian variety of that much misused tongue, till the lady came to the rescue in various languages, of which the English had a slight foreign turn; this done she left the shop with a bowing acknowledgment of George's thanks.

George, snatching his parcel, hurried after her, pursued by a breathless shopman with the change; and, thoroughly hunting through the length and breadth of the Piazza and its arcades, discovered her at last sitting very tranquilly, with the same mysterious, unobservant countenance, at a little table outside Café Florian, listening to the band that was beginning to play in the middle of the square. With a sigh of satisfaction he chose a table commanding hers and hidden by a pillar of the arcade, sat done to coffee and a cigar and watched and listened, while the twilight deepened, the stars came out above the roofs and strains of Wagner, Saint-Saens, Verdi and Mascagni rose from the lamp-hung bandstand, round which an increasing crowd slowly circled with a low hum of voices and laughter, their cigarette smoke troubling the pure evening air. St. Mark's, like the jeweled walls of the city of the Apocalypse crowned with hovering angels and incense clouds, glowed in the mingling of sunset and lamplight and fading memories of sunlit splendor where the lights of the Piazza touched its domes and pinnacles, that were lost among the stars.

The lady's table was outside and below the arcade, whence George saw her as the center of the moving picture in the glow of the lamps and arcade lights. It seemed as if the music centered in her, while she sat solitary, sipping an unattractive beverage from a tall glass, her eyes bent

on an Italian newspaper, and smoked cigarettes in a way that made him class that kind of smoking among the fine arts. The lights touched the gold of her hair to fire, while the band played a selection from *Samson et Delilah,* and the crowd of soldiers, children, nurses and girls in Venetian shawls, colorless middle and bright-hued lower-class people, smart officers and tourists anything but smart, flowed, buzzing with talk and laughter, round the bandstand and in and out among tables in the square. There she sat, unmoved, unobservant, entirely absorbed in her paper.

A man came up and talked with her a moment; another came and sat down, much diverted apparently by her lively talk, and went away, shaking with laughter, with a flower from a bunch a flower-girl had sold her in his coat. George thought this foreigner would have been the better for a kicking. Presently a waiter came to him and, with the usual perversity of these benighted foreigners, persisted in misunderstanding his slow and distinct French and refusing his silver, while inconsistently demanding more; and when this skirmish was over the lady was gone, and the waiter mentally consigned to regions inhospitable.

But something told him that somewhere that face would appear again. He sat down to dinner in cheerful mood, and properly appreciated the soup, while studying and placing the groups and solitaries at other tables and looking in vain for yesterday's Americans, entirely forgetful of the spasm of longing in the square.

Then a waiter brought a wine list, which seemed to contain everything but what was wanted and to be out of everything that was chosen. During the series of misunderstandings and elaborate explanations this gave rise to, he did not observe that a table near his had been occupied, and looked up with a start and flush to meet the enigmatical

gaze of the lady, who acknowledged his look of pleasure and surprise by a slight bow and the faintest suspicion of a smile.

Not English, he was sure, but of what nationality he could not guess. Venetian trinkets, lovely and valueless, gleamed on the marble column of her throat and the rounded symmetry of her arms; she was less *decolleté* tonight, dressed in some misty sequined silk stuff, that suggested twilight touched with pale stars; a bunch of waxen white tuberose in her corsage surrounded her with an atmosphere of malign witchery. Such a throat, such a poise of head, such perfect molding of arms and bust the People's Man had never seen. She seemed to embody the spirit of Venetian supremacy, Venetian beauty, art and—ruthlessness; the fierce splendor and luxury of long-dead ages, touched by some wild wizardry to a mephitic life, was in her strange, bright eyes.

After dinner, when he found her sitting apart in the entrance hall, with a pile of papers and some cigarettes before her, encouraged by a glance, he boldly took a chair near, struck a match and silently offered it, with a word of gratitude for her kind office in the shop.

"It was a lovely bit of *spagnoletto* you were buying," she said, and he learned that this fairy-like chainwork, fine as a spider's web yet strong and durable, was among the dainty productions peculiar to Venetian craftsmen, and drew the necklace from his pocket to be appreciated and held up to the light. Then the delicate intricacy of its innumerable chains was displayed upon the marble roundness of the Lady's arms and the original destination of the trinket was forgotten.

Many other things he learned about Venice and her crafts and arts and sights and ways, most of which, but not all, could have been found, less pleasantly though equally well, in guide-books; she seemed to have been everywhere and

know all the political and diplomatic life of all the capitals in Europe.

Perhaps she was a spy, or an agent of secret police; she seemed particularly well acquainted with Russia and Russian ways. Sometimes there was a hint of terror in her eyes.

"Were you at Florence some ten days since?" he asked, presently.

"Yes. And so were you. In the Uffizi." She smiled that curious, ironic smile, that stung and yet stimulated him, and he remembered that she had been near Titian's Sleeping Venus and had worn the same expression as that lovely, hateful creation.

"I thought I had seen you there," he said indifferently, looking at the floor to avoid her gaze, in which there was the faintest hint of triumph.

"You have the priceless gift of remembering faces," she said in rich tones that had the intoxicating quality of tuberose scent, "the attribute of royalty crowned or uncrowned. No doubt you have already found it of service."

"Oh! it depends on the faces. There are some the silliest ass could not forget, once seen."

"Savanarola's, for instance; or Cyrano de Bergerac's?" she asked, meeting his suddenly burning gaze with the grave simplicity of a child. He knew then that she was an actress. Eleanora Dusé? No; too young. How old was she? It was not so much that she was young, as that age could have nothing to do with her; she was all the beauty of all the temptresses on earth.

He came down early next morning and went out to take his coffee and roll. He wanted the fresh sea-sweetness of the sunny air to take away the heavy scent of tuberose. He decided to lunch and dine out as well. She might be gone by next day and never more cross his horizon. Lady Arabel Errisson was the name attached to her number on

the list of visitors. Paris, Florence and Venice visited, she would probably go elsewhere; she had spoken of the lakes.

Up the steps of the bridge over the lane of water between the prison and the doges' palace, he sprang, light as a deer, whistling softly to himself,

"Dites, la jeune et belle,
Où voulez-vous aller?
La voile ouvre——"

then stopped short, meeting the conquering, ironic gaze he dreaded. The Lady, leaning on the parapet and facing the Bridge of Sighs, had turned her head at the sound of the springing step and was smiling a welcome to him.

"What a morning," the rich voice murmured. "A joy to be alive."

The light in his eyes echoed her words, and quite naturally, as if there was nothing else to do, they went down the steps together. They lingered a little to make out the carvings on the capitals of the palace loggia, and strolled across the Piazza to a fleet of gondolas moored to the quay, where she chose one for him, and at his suggestion stepped lightly in and sank upon the cushions, quietly murmuring to the gondolier, "Canale Grande," and so they glided over the clear sea in the sunny air on a voyage of beauty and marvel, saying little and enjoying much. The rich voice from time to time announced, *"Ca d'Oro,—Salute, Accademia—Rialto,"* as they passed palace, church and bridge and those little fascinating squares of green foliage and bright blossom, that give such relief to the brilliance of marble palace and vari-colored *palo,* tingeing the blue water they overhang with other hues. Presently they turned from the broad blue canal to avoid the fussy little steamers that interrupted the gracious silence and soiled the clean sunshine with smoke, and darted into quiet, narrow *rii,* winding under

many a bridge and balcony. They lunched in a lovely little square blocked by an exquisite bridge, and cooled and shadowed by a tiny bit of garden, where they sat long, with coffee and cigarettes, and the gondolier slept a deep, sweet sleep. There George learned from scattered hints that Lady Arabel was a widow, a lonely being, without encumbrance, haunted by mysteriously tragic memories, and the owner of extensive property, from the enjoyment of which some curious kink of legal verbiage or criminal intrigue of counter-claimants seemed to have deprived her. Lonely, lovely and wronged, she was more fascinating than ever, and, before the day was over, her sinister and ironic manner had changed to a clinging pathetic sweetness that was irresistible.

Next day there was nowhere any trace of Lady Arabel in or out of the hotel; the golden Italian quality disappeared from the sunshine, and the graceful poise of gondoliers swaying to the skilled sweep of the long oars that guided the steel-beaked boats had lost its charm. The little table next his, tragically empty, had a gleam of hope at dinner in its damask miter, fresh roll and newly placed bouquet, hope fulfilled at last by the entrance of a much-muffled and gracefully fatigued lady, late in the evening.

After that no whole day passed without companionship. They went together to Murano and Burano, to galleries, theaters and churches, stood together at Verona at the tomb of Juliet, bathed together on the Lido, glided together through moonlit canals echoing with music from gondolas and balconies; the hours swept by in a growing dream, in which all past things were as if they had never been.

Returning home by moonlight one evening, when the band had played in the Piazza after dinner and they had sat with coffee and cigarettes listening and talking, they paused in the Piazzetta and loved that lovely side-view of San Marco and the doges' palace, clear in every detail of columned arcade and

carven capital; and there, on a bench in a corner under the loggia, a sharp contrast to the romantic beauty and splendor, they saw a huddled figure of sordid wretchedness crouching in unrestful sleep, the weary head hanging limp on the breast —an echo of the homeless misery of railway arch and river embankment at home. It made George ache through all the enchantment that was numbing his higher faculties.

But Lady Arabel made a movement of impatience and disgust: "Oh, yes, horrid, isn't it?" she said, hurrying on. "What can the police be about, one wonders. My dear Mr. Darrell!"—George had gone to the ragged bundle and pressed silver into the limp and nerveless hand, that clutched it fiercely through all the heaviness of exhaustion—"*how* sweet of you; but oh! how foolish, how reckless!"

A spasm of hatred of her went through him, unreasonable as it was violent, and her beauty became more disgusting to him than the dirt and squalor of the ragged, homeless creature whose weary abandonment had moved his pity and sorrow, and whom he saw not as a solitary outcast, but as the waste and wreckage of a whole civilization.

She watched his gloomy, scowling face with petulant yet indulgent amusement as they passed on in a silence of sullenness on one side and speculation on the other. Instead of entering the hotel with him when they reached it she turned him back with a light touch on his arm which obliged him against his will to meet her eyes in which lurked a smile that stole his strength away. Then something that he only half understood was said in a voice that affected him even more strongly than the smile; the cloud passed; the spell resumed its sway and they strolled along the Riva by the moonlit lagoon till the hotel lights had nearly all gone out.

CHAPTER III

EVERY hour of that golden Venetian holiday became more vivid, the past and future more dim and dream-like, and the world, with all its wounds and scars, more completely forgotten. But the People's Man, in spite of his careful arrangements to avoid being pursued by correspondence, was annoyed one bright midday at having two letters, bearing signs and marks of urgency, pressed upon him by a zealous and conscientious waiter. One of these, in a clear and characteristic writing that brought a pang to his heart and a cloud to his face, was light and thin and quickly pocketed unread: that was from Sylvia. The other, long and thick and official-looking, was signed by a Cabinet Minister; that was read carefully and with absorbed interest more than once.

Lady Arabel had an engagement that morning, but would probably be free after luncheon—a hint that George was to be somewhere at hand on the look-out for her. As the one place at hand where one was quite safe from her was inside St. Mark's, the atmosphere of churches having a bad effect upon her ladyship, there he took refuge and sat down to think over his letters in the cool, soft gloom—wicked gloom, she called it, asking not unreasonably what was the good of beauty nobody could possibly see.

There he meditated long in the stillness, while dim gold gleams in cupola and spandril grew upon the sight till the confused gold and color of the mosaics gleaming out from the shadowy dimness became scenes of spiritual beauty, and all the rich interior, with sanctuary and chapel, pillared arch

and pictured dome, was gradually revealed in its entire perfection with the finely patterned marbles of the uneven pavement heaving like a frozen sea beneath.

It was impossible to read in that gorgeous gloom; so presently he went into the silent and empty baptistery, where the iron gate falling to with an echoing clang behind him gave assurance of undisturbed quiet, and sat on the red marble bench by the tomb of the last great Doge, whose effigy, calm in his last, long, angel-shadowed sleep, deepened the solemn peace.

That man had served the state without swerve or compromise; single-hearted and strong, neither the tool of faction nor the slave of tyrannous, unthinking multitudes, he had ruled firmly and well according to his lights. George read the deep peace of faithful service crowned with rest in the calm and noble face. "Could there ever have been war or doubt or perplexity of divided purpose in that serene breast?" he mused, and then, bending to the light streaming through the window upon the sleeping figure, he drew a letter from his pocket, spread it open and read:

"Dearest George," with a start and a flush.

Sylvia's letter and still unread? Yet who but Sylvia could advise in this crisis—of which, from the tone of her letter, she seemed to have not the faintest inkling—or who be more deeply interested in its issue, that they had so often discussed together? A purer atmosphere seemed to breathe even in that quiet place, hallowed by centuries of prayer and aspiration and great memories, on the opening of this letter. The old exalted passion and purity came back to him, as it had come back that day in the Accademia, when he stood devoutly rapt, like those up-gazing Apostles in the picture, before the great Assumption of Titian. In that impassioned mingling of innocent awe and rapture, that makes this Madonna, upsoaring with outstretched arms and long-

ing reverent gaze, the embodiment of the soul's highest aspiration, he saw what he had sometimes caught glimpses of in Sylvia's clear and radiant gaze; even the features recalled her and the light in the waved hair.

The Lady of the Louvre had not shared his enthusiasm; one got so tired of those everlasting Madonnas, she said.

But there was a chill touch in this letter of Sylvia's, and though it was concerned chiefly with his affairs, she seemed quite out of touch with them; yet, as he remembered with some discomfort, it was very long since she had had any first-hand news of him. He would, of course, know all about the proposed changes in the Cabinet. Her father was very ill and claimed all her time. "Selfish old brute!" George thought resentfully. Her father always came first; it was not fair. After all, Sylvia had never really cared for him and never would; it was very clear now and quite natural, and then she was thoroughly tired of the long engagement he had so stupidly pressed upon her. So he must make this grave and instant decision alone, badly as he needed a lead from her. Till today the need for a swift and sure decision had always brought one, but he had lost the self-reliant certainty that comes of singleness of purpose with energy of character now; his head was heavy; there was a dullness in his pulse-beats. This was not the gallant and glad knight-errant bent on the joyous adventure of vigorous life, and ready to dare the Devil himself with a smile and certainty of conquest, who had set out so confidently to mend a broken world.

One last look at the sleeping Dandolo, who had never known doubt in face of duty, and he went back to the gleam-lit gloom of the church, where subdued chanting rolled like sea murmurs over the sea-like marbles of the pavement, and devout kneeling figures were scattered about; past the sumptuous sanctuary, where the legendary alabaster

columns gleamed on the High Altar, to the Lady Chapel, where the most numerous worshipers clustered, lights glowed and voices sang.

There he stood apart in the shadow with that old hushed awed delight, in the solemn beauty, first kindled in childhood by the little gray church, delight intensified now by lingering scents of incense—the true church smell, according to Sylvia —and with something of the old uplifting of heart. There was an impulse to kneel, body and soul, and casting the heavy burden of sophistry and doubt away, implore forgiveness and help. But he could not—within him was frigid stubbornness and shrinking and above Heaven was dark with cloud. Here more than ever he was an alien and an outsider.

Presently one of the people kneeling in the chapel rose and came with reverent step and bent head in the direction of his corner. It was the slight, small figure, weathered and wiry, of a middle-aged laboring man, with finely-cut Italian features and deep, bright eyes, that looked up to what the unseen George perceived was a tall bronze crucifix, borne on a six-foot-high pedestal, a few feet in front of him.

There the man stopped, bowed and signed himself, his eyes again lifted with an expression of devout and tender affection, mixed with longing, pity and trust, such as George had never seen. Again the grizzled head was bent and a long kiss, tender, reverent, adoring, sorrowful, pressed upon the cornice of the pedestal. There was a pause, as if in prayer, and then once more the grave, devout face was raised with a long sigh to the suffering Figure on the Cross, and a second kiss, on his own fingers this time, but equally tender and devout, was gently transmitted, with some difficulty and stretching, to the pierced feet above his head, and sudden hot tears blotted crucifix, worshiper and background of lighted chapel and kneeling people from George's sight. He had seen that it was neither the bronze figure nor some

dim, far-off abstraction, but a very dear and trusted friend, actually present and acquainted with all his needs, hopes and frailties, yet master and maker and divine, that the gentle and pure-hearted workman had saluted with such adoring reverence. In the moment's deep emotion he would have given all he had or hoped for in this world to be able to feel what he had seen in this nameless laborer's face. He was taken with a wild, home-sick longing for the happy, unquestioning faith of the chorister-boy in the village church, for occasional golden moments of divine intuition vouchsafed to the ardent youth and self-dedicated lover of his kind, seized with bitter regret for lost opportunity, world-stifled aspirations and slowly darkening earth-moldered ideals. Then another worshiper bowed down, body and soul, in the gorgeous gloom of the chapel, full of shame and anguished penitence and high resolve.

Out in the broad dazzle of the Piazza, the gigantic Campanile towering high into the sunlit blue offered a new refuge from the dreaded influence that benumbed aspiration and paralyzed all higher aims; and the anachronism of modern machinery whisked him to the top of the medieval tower, almost as quickly as the world-old contrivance of thought would have done. There was no fear of finding Lady Arabel on the breezy platform built with columned openings round the four huge bells, whence the brown-roofed city, with dome and spire and cliff-like palace, was seen spread out upon the sea, fresh and clear-colored as if just sprung from the waves, looking ready to float away, yet immovable as rock. There the sweet sparkling air, so far above earth, made breath easier and thought swifter, clearer and more subtle to George; while its chief effect on his lady friend was to make her desperately giddy—besides disarranging her hair and those subtle toilet effects in which she excelled.

She could not be there, yet thoughts of her and things she

had said kept floating up. "You are so perfectly delicious, with your giant capacity and your baby scruples." But he was not so sure of his capacity today, and his scruples weighed upon him more heavily than the child St. Christopher carried across the river. "The world is made of men and men are made of mud—only San Giorgio is gold, pure gold."—"You can't feed men on rose-leaves and dewdrops or keep them wrapped in silver paper."—"The world is for him who grabs it."—"Clean hands do no work."—"Truth is well enough for fools and children, but the first qualification for men of the world is to lie with vigor and discretion." It seemed poor stuff up here in the clean, fresh air, but treasures of practical wisdom and knowledge of the world under the numbing spell of her presence.

Here one could muse undisturbed and plan without bias, looking down upon a prospect as glorious as it is unique. The beautiful city with all her domes and spires and roofs of warm, rich brown spread itself with many an offset upon the sea, as a water-lily spreads its broad leaves and up-curved cups upon a lake; a city that had been a powerful state and drawn the old world's wealth through her liquid ways; a city that had conquered princes and warred with emperors and popes; a city of uncrowned kings, too superb to owe obedience to any one man and too wise to dissolve in democracy. Beyond the deep blue band of sea on the north, a fainter blue, the rich Italian mainland, rolled with lake and river and castled hill to the far, dim Alpine ranges. Beyond their faintly gleaming snow-peaks was the territory of the great alien race, whose imaginative complexity and forest-born gloom had left the impress of a mysterious charm on the sunny beauty of so many an Italian church and palace. There, beyond the dim, long line of the Lido, glowed the purple sea that had been the pathway of all the powers and splendors of the world. Down below in the basin of St.

Mark, the link between Oriental and western civilization, among east-bound liners and coasting craft, the long, gray hull of an English warship was slowly gliding past the armored Italian vessel lying off the Riva; while beyond the rose and amber of the western sky could be divined the unseen, ancient domination of the seven-hilled city. And from this little gem-like city had sprung a power great among those glories; the bronze horses from Byzantium, the archaic pillars from the East and the Lion looking grimly out to sea from his tall pillar, as if musing upon the many subject cities he had kept his cynical watch upon, witnessed to this. This was the work of no turbulent, capricious democracy. These Venetian nobles had been strong and wise and severe, sometimes cruel but mainly just, in their rule. Was it race, or early struggle, or simple fear of God?

Whether that deep sighing of the poor, sounding at times through all the thunder of the on-rolling centuries, had been louder or lower under that powerful oligarchy, Heaven only knew; but strong rule makes for justice and is the best guarantee of mercy. This people's Christianity had been less stained with paganism than that of other states; the jeweled marble Bible of the doges' basilica and their artistic records of national achievement gave the greater glory to God; such art could only have existed in the leisure of wealth and aristocracy and such national achievement was only possible under firm rule. There can be no great achievement in anything where there is equality. All meet on equal terms only in that realm of ordered emotion strengthened by thought, that shapes conduct and is called religion. That is the only possible democracy and the only really uplifting power for any man or class; kings' hearts are wax to it and it is the wisdom of the unlearned. George had seen it on the face of the Italian working man in St. Mark's that day and it had broken his heart.

His own religion had faded to little more than a channel for esthetic enjoyment; yet he knew that the hard, cold light of intellect is sterile of all upon which morality or any real civilization can be based. He knew that man is in part a supernatural being and needs intercourse with the supernatural to lift him from the misery into which a thinking animal at the mercy of his instincts inevitably falls, and he longed with bitter longing for one moment of the old unworldly days when Heaven had seemed so near and the peace of God so sure, and with anguish sought some place of repentance for his wandering from the first high standard of political honesty that he had set himself. Did he any longer believe in the political and social principles he constantly upheld? That often-dreamed Utopia of equal comfort he knew would be the death of art and beauty and the atrophy of every higher human faculty; he knew that equality in things human does not exist, that men are born unequal in a world of variety and inequality. There is but one Venice in all the world; there was but one Greece, one Rome and one Jerusalem; one perfection of art in the ancient, and one in the modern, world; but one supremely artistic and intellectual race in each, perhaps in both, for where the Latins are at their best there is nearly always a Grecian strain, and modern art derives from ancient. The golden age of Greek tragedy was comprised in one small half-century of the world's history. There has been but one Homer, one Dante and one Shakespeare; one Michael Angelo, one Raphael and one Titian, one Aristotle and one Plato, one Moses and one St. Francis of Assisi. Not every European country has a literature, hardly more than two have produced great music. Not even yet is the whole of Europe civilized. But wherever in the wide world a spark of civilization has penetrated, there the thoughts and works of the few solitary master-minds that star the darkness of past ages, shape the thoughts and mold the

destinies of the men of today, even of the hand-working millions who have neither leisure nor training for thought, but have abundance of unsquandered feeling. In that realm of feeling men meet at last on equal terms, and the only really uplifting power, the ordered emotion that shapes conduct for all, becomes the wisdom of the unlearned. George had long been unlearning that wisdom and his conduct had gone down in proportion. For that passionate conviction of the divine right of the multitude to rule by sheer weight of numbers, that theory of government by and for the People; those dreams of equal distribution of the world's wealth and bodily comfort; that faith in state interference to make everybody comfortable and satisfied, had gradually been shed like worn-out clothes, and yet he still used them as war-cries and political credentials. And though he was still in heart the People's Man, another conception of the people and their cause and needs had grown up in his mind and could not be avowed without ruin. If the game was to be played and the shibboleth of party spoken, he had to live in an atmosphere of compromise which was not congenial to the rustic simplicity and headlong sincerity of his temperament. To have voted for, written for and spoken in and out of the House for, measures incompatible with convictions and principles had been neither pleasant nor easy. But if he were honest Labor would have none of him, while if he were wholly on the side of Labor, he could never be in office. And as a free lance he would have no weight. He despised the ministry for its vacillating policy, broken pledges, violated principles, tyrannous practice and weakness masked by bluff; most of all—and that made his blood boil—for its cynical denial of any motive but self-interest to the classes it courted and flattered with glittering baits of rare and refreshing grapes of Eschol, new lamps for old and nineteen shillings for eighteen pence. Yet he had been able to find no alterna-

tive but to bow for a time in the house of Rimmon. For the People's Man must not only have power but wealth and rank. Therefore he had arrived at the conclusion that he must renounce the woman he had loved so long, since Sylvia very plainly had neither.

So he had written, but not yet sent, a letter to Sylvia to that effect that very morning. He was, and had always known that he was, quite unworthy of her; he ought not to have taken advantage of her generosity. She had saved him from despair; her friendship was the best memory and greatest inspiration of his life; she would always be the embodiment of his highest ideal and the object of his deepest, most enduring devotion. He believed all this when he wrote it; but at the same time he meant to marry Lady Arabel, who was made to be the wife of a public man by virtue of her rank, knowledge of the world and acquaintance with international politics, and not least by the immense wealth to which she was entitled. It would be a more useful marriage even than Disraeli's, and coming suddenly at this critical turning-point in his political life was more than chance; he saw the finger of Fate in it.

These had been morning thoughts; with midday came the letter that brought things to a crisis, asking if he was prepared to accept office in the event of certain contingencies and under certain conditions.

He was prepared, at the sacrifice of his convictions—he called it their temporary suppression—he also had much plausible argument ready to lay before his party to convince them that the step was the greatest service he could render their cause and that the unprecedented nature of the offer was the best assurance of the increasing weight of their influence. It was almost certain that he was to have been the Labor Leader in the event of the present Leader's probable resignation; but he knew that his lapses from the party creed were

beginning to be found out by certain shrewder minds and must soon be made public, and persuaded himself that he could do more for Labor in the Cabinet than out of it, even though his next step must be to hoist Liberal colors.

But the hour in St. Mark's had changed everything. No more opportunism, only plain dealing now. He knew that he could no more go or long appear to go with the Liberal, than with the Labor party, or the Unionist; more than that, he knew that parties themselves were changing and dissolving, that the country was on the eve, if not already in the dawn, of far-reaching revolutionary change. He saw almost absolute sovereignty usurped by a political faction; he saw parliamentary rule, "that profane exercise of the sacred rights of sovereignty by political classes," [1] made absolute by devouring its own elder and restraining half, just as King, Barons and Church had each in turn been devoured by its successor. He saw the dominance of the landed aristocracy superseded by commercial and middle-class rule, and that in its turn beginning to yield to the pressure of the great unthinking muscle-and-machine-workers, and foresaw and dreaded a coming struggle between the whole mass of muscle-workers against every other class.

To arrest that great catastrophe, many theories had been forming in his mind. An oligarchy seemed to be the only stable and workable government. Not Venetian, that was obsolete. He sometimes dreamed Disraeli's dream of a pyramid of free people ascending plane upon plane in smooth gradation with the monarch as apex, supported by free laws and widely diffused intelligence and morality. There must be elected and perhaps hereditary councils, but the franchise must be limited, the electors elected, all classes represented, rulers taken only from the most capable and instructed classes. The country was on the brink of many kinds of ruin; a

[1] Disraeli in "Sybil."

man was wanted. He might be that man. But he must have place and power, and meant to at all costs—till this afternoon.

He leaned his head against a column of the pierced arcade and saw the beauty of Venice spread in rich sunset light below, the colonnades of the ducal palace diminished to the lace-like carving of an ivory fan, the smooth sea-plain specked with gnat-like gondolas; people in the Piazza minimized to flies, the streets of sea to threads of silvery blue. He stood, disburdened of ambition and sophistry, reinvested with the pure devotion of first youth, all the falsehood stripped from his soul, and considered what to do first, thinking hard as he slowly tore the letter to Sylvia into tiny bits and let them float lazily down on the still air.

Then he filled two telegraph forms on a note-book and jotted down the heads of a reply to the ministerial letter. It might be necessary to resign his seat in the House; he might never now be in office or even in Parliament at all; but his life's aim could still be pursued and even achieved.

Perhaps all those schemes and plans could be best thought out and matured in private and diffused far and wide by pen and speech; Sylvia would support and help him—why had women been so long excluded from public affairs?—she would inspire and guide him; they would be poor, perhaps obscure, but they would be happy and high Heaven would be on his side; and the cause would triumph, if not through him, through another. No longer the People's darling and idol but the People's Man always, though they cast him out, their friend and servant, perhaps their prophet, though they stoned him; unburdened by cares of office, untempted by ambition or wealth, he would do what Heaven willed; and none could do more. He drew long breaths like happy sighs in the quickening relief and restfulness of this resolve; his

heart beat gently to a calm, delicious music, earth was made new again and heaven very near.

A fresher air stole up from the sea, with a sound of singing borne mellowed over the water and confused murmurs from the Piazza, where St. Mark's shone magnificent in the deepening gold of a sinking sun. The sight-seeing crowd, buzzing round his silent, statue-like figure on the Campanile, had thinned; he became aware of being alone in his niche, then of a faint rustle of drapery, a penetrating perfume, a dreaded, yet desired, presence and a rich voice softly murmuring, "Zorzi," and turned to look into the glowing eyes, half-ironic, half-caressing, wholly conquering, of Lady Arabel, and knew that the loveliest and most fascinating woman in the world was his for the asking. And while all the baser elements in him leaped to light for a moment with that knowledge at the challenge of her glance and the smile curving her full and beautiful lips, he knew that she had divined his knowledge and so thought with superb insolence to hold him consciously in thrall.

"You here?" he asked, straightening himself to a more deferential posture and raising his hat ceremoniously. "An unexpected pleasure, indeed. Then you have overcome your terror of high places, Lady Arabel?"

"One must. No use to lose what remains of life to a lonely woman by giving way to weakness, the lingering effect of a terrible shock. I lost my husband"—a deep sigh—"in a very tragic way"—a deeper and more gasping sigh—"but there are things one dare not think—one cannot always—one has to live—one must steel oneself." She went closer to the arched opening, laying a tremulous hand with studied unconsciousness on his protecting arm.

"You'll soon get over it—impossible to fall," he said rather gruffly, slipping his arm from the light touch that was like flame upon it.

"But the tower might—as it did before—and no wonder, with these enormous bells tugging at it; it suddenly sat down with a roar and was nothing but a heap of rubbish; all the bells smashed to atoms except that great Marangona there. We happened to be in Venice——"

Her face in three-quarter profile was framed by the columned arch on a background of lapis lazuli blue, like an early Italian painting; rich sunset gold burned like a halo in her hair; one hand clung tightly to a column in default of George's arm as she looked fearfully down to the Piazza, then moved away with a little shudder. "I dare not look—dare not—frail creature that I am——"

"Not at all," he contradicted roughly; "you are quite brave; you'll soon be all right. This tower won't fall, you may count on that. Look at San Giorgio, beyond the warship there. That ought to cure you."

"I have been looking at San Giorgio for some minutes," she said very softly with her subtle smile; "not the tower of the saint, but the saint on the tower, San Giorgio in meditation."

"Look at that boat with the white star," he said, reflecting that she must have followed him from St. Mark's; "she's going to Trieste."

"Really? How very interesting! Was your holiness meditating on her?"

"But after all the look-out on the north is the best," he went on, stolidly ignoring her twinkling glance and shrinking away from her in a repugnance that was partly physical, yet mixed with an immense and dreaded attraction and brutal impulse to seize and crush her in his arms, stifle her with kisses and dash her to atoms on the marble pavement below. "That is really fine, and just the light and the clearness for it."

She turned with a little ironic bow and crossed by the

four immense bronze bells, large enough for tents, that hung motionless, each with its metal clapper ready to give tongue and fill all Venice with the sound, and looked across the sea to the Alps stretching dim and far along the mainland, their snow-peaks burning in amber light. He followed at a safe distance and gave utterance to one or two civil platitudes, that she received with silent resignation and apparent absorption in landscape beauty. It was their last meeting and it must be short; but it need not be brutal, he thought, trying not to look at her. Then on a sudden she turned, with the smile that always had a tinge of mockery yet was very sweet to him, and now tender and appealing.

"Bad news?" she asked, as if finding an excuse for his gruffness, and her eyes held him against his rapidly weakening will. After all, she was a woman; who could be sullen to the lovely pleading face, so superb usually, so full of tenderness now, and so touching in its unspoken confession and meek and clinging dependence? His fear grew; it made him dizzy and confused; the beautiful face, clear against the lovely background framed by the arch, and the splendidly molded form, swam before him, the tower rocked; he seemed to be falling headlong down an endless steep. Then with an effort he pulled himself together.

"On the contrary, my post was rather good this morning," he said lightly. "And yours?"

"Ah, mine!" she sighed tragically, yet not without a tinge of amusement at seeing the letters he still held in his hand, one of which she observed was in a feminine handwriting, furtively slipped into his pocket; "it was partly this morning's mail that goaded me to come up here and try to get over at least one poor feminine weakness. A woman against the world must steel herself. For all the world is against me—except you, my *friend*." Her voice dropped to a low, passionate sob on the word; she turned away, with heaving

breast and bitten lip, to dash away an imaginary tear. George went very white.

"You *are* my friend?" she added meekly, turning back and recovering herself, with a pleading upward glance.

"Why, of course," he growled, ferocious in the effort to command himself; "of course. What nonsense. You mustn't take such fancies into your head. You've heaps of friends, heaps and heaps. This beastly law business you told me of has been too much for you, put you off your balance. It'll all come right, Lady Arabel, never fear. I'll do what I can. Nuisance that I've got to go home tonight."

He had turned to avoid the lovely and touching face and stared stiffly at the great caged bells while he spoke, and so missed the green flash of fury in her eye.

"Ah! the letter," she said sharply; "is she ill?"

"She? Who? What?" he jerked out, turning with a savage scowl that she met very meekly, knowing perfectly well to what it was due.

"Look at the bell, Zorzi, how it trembles!" she said, gently turning him, with a touch that made his heart-throbs audible.

He shook himself free and faced her, breathing hard. "What a beast I am," he moaned to himself. "Dear lady," he said aloud with forced gentleness, "I'm rather bothered with a lot of business that calls me home suddenly. It was such a ripping holiday, too. But——"

"But the People's Man is not his own master?" She smiled up into his face with that wonderful, overpowering light and mysterious enchantment in her eyes, that seemed to melt the very sinews of his soul to water, and he felt himself sinking, bewildered, madly struggling against heavy odds, unable to withdraw his gaze from the beautiful, softly smiling, appealing face, when suddenly there broke out a loud reverberating boom all around, above and below them, as if the whole world had turned to an ocean of eddying, billow-

ing sound, in which they were tossed and steeped and remorselessly rolled, and with a piercing cry of terror and anguish, her sweetly smiling face convulsed and ashen white, Lady Arabel fell half-fainting into his arms, her face pressed shuddering into his breast.

"Cheer up! It's only the Angelus," he shouted, hurrying and half-carrying her past the huge, vibrating tents of bronze, that sent out one after the other such floods and torrents of sound as shook, and threatened to shatter, the great tower, to the lift which stood open to receive them, and in which they sank through the vibrating walls in a roaring, whirling vortex of thunder-waves, closely clasped together, to emerge in a few seconds, that seemed ages, into the gleam-touched twilight of the Piazza, where people were contentedly taking tea and ices outside cafés, and the bells chimed pleasantly like bells, and not demons of crashing sound, and George's hearty laugh rang out in reassuring mockery of Lady Arabel's terrors, though his hands shook as he led her to a seat in the warm, sweet air, and his face was strained and gray.

BOOK V

THE STATESMAN

CHAPTER I

BEACHYHEAD stood dark against a rose and gold sky, the low tide, clear blue in plaques to the east and a sheet of gold where it caught the sunset radiance below the headland, murmured caressingly in many voices of thunder hushed to reverent calm. Two destroyers lay off the shore, their black hulls bronzed by the western glow, their sinister outlines a menacing portent in the sweet calm. A dusky mass of downland, sweeping in noble lines up to the Head against the burnished west, with a dark cottage clear on its skyline, and field, farm and wood on its flank showing dim but distinct in the mystic twilight, made a background for the slender figure of Sylvia Mostyn, sitting musing on a bench on the deserted Holywell sea-wall, and feeling the peace and consolation of the magic hour sink with healing into her heart, which was sorely in need of some such balm.

She had just completed a long and arduous task, with the weary satisfaction that yearns for long sleep and the heart-break that accompanies the final rending of natural ties and longs for the solace of human companionship and affection. For during the last year her father had clung to her more and more in the utter dependence of age and weakness and she had enjoyed the deep happiness of ministering to his solace and comfort. But all was ended now and she was sitting alone and desolate by the deserted sea-wall.

Verena and Gladys had gone off at last, though not quite to their mother's satisfaction; and the wedding-bells had hardly finished ringing for Gladys, when poor Mrs. Mostyn took a chill—owing, her husband thought, to the extreme

youthfulness of her attire—and after a lingering illness, during which she entreated her step-daughter never to leave her and showed great unwillingness to see her own daughters (who, to do them justice, were equally anxious to stay away from her) she passed away, deeply mourned by her husband, whose immense relief from this long bondage was of the quality of *la joie qui fait peur*. He labeled this very decorously by a name in which he firmly believed—thankfulness for her deliverance from long and patient suffering—and became very pathetic over his bereavement and loneliness. Sylvia needed no pressure to induce her to come to his rescue and brighten and sweeten the evening of his life with tender and affectionate companionship; she was even grateful to the late Mrs. Bowers for so kindly and considerately vacating a place she had long usurped. She had been very happy in those two years in her own home, in spite of the strain of the perpetual ministering and the sadness and growing estrangement in another quarter.

"You have always been my own little girl," her father murmured, clinging to her hand and blessing her before lapsing into the silence that awaits us all.

The dear old father needed no more care now; all rites, all painful and petty duties had been performed, the wild hysterics and sordid dissensions of Verena and Gladys, whose real affection for their step-father was curiously mingled with a solid determination to get all they could out of him, alive or dead, borne with and calmed; all claims and obligations discharged. And finally, earth had been cast with tears upon the flower-covered coffin that afternoon, and the followers and friends gone home.

And now in the sudden empty stillness the full weight of her desolation fell upon Sylvia. She missed her father's constant dependence, his many needs, his wistful interest in things, his pleasure in all she did and said. Old forgotten

things came back with doubled sweetness; his fleeing to her for comfort and protection from domestic tyranny, the illness that had so nearly made an end of him when poor Mrs. Mostyn had to be spirited away to the south coast to save him; that unforgettable morning after the night-watch when George had suddenly come to her out of the heart of May morning beauty and turned all her life to sweetness. Perhaps he would come now, round that corner where the sea was blue, with the same look in his face but the glory of autumn evening upon it instead of spring morning sunshine, and the old unutterable happiness and mutual trust would return, and all the heart-anguish of gradual cooling and estrangement be forever forgotten.

The letter that lay in her lap must be to announce his coming; her own letter had no doubt met with the fate of others she had written, and followed him from place to place; this accounted for his long silence. Coming this evening from her silent house, a little way up the hill, where she had been so happy with her father and whence he had just been carried out in that inevitable tragic helplessness, and aching with instinctive longing to flee away and find fresh life and comfort somewhere, she had met the postman at the gate and put out her hand to be gladdened, beyond expectation and almost to tears, by sight of a dear, thin square with foreign stamps and the firm, clear, ever-welcome handwriting. Too precious to be read in public, or in the house of death, or perhaps because of a secret doubt as to its purport, she carried it tucked away in her dress down to the august companionship of the sea, to be opened as soon as the walk was clear, even of the boatman lounging home with his eye on the weather, and the little whistling boy aiming pebbles at the tangle-covered rocks to assert his manhood as he passed, and when the curious tremor in hand and limb had subsided under the infinite consolation and reassurance of the low, continuous sea-thunder, that

brought to mind the voice once heard at Patmos, "as the sound of many waters."

Then in the sweet peace and gladness of the blue-and-gold evening, the letter was drawn from its hiding place, and contemplated in the rich light. The postmark was Venice—so he was seeing Venice at last. The latest intention had been a race to one of the colonies, his usual holiday ground. New countries, young nations, fresh, vigorous life, institutions and ideas springing upwards from the People; these had always been his passion. To him age was decay, historic associations a cramping fetter, tradition hide-bound prejudice; but latterly there had been notes of disappointment—the new democracies had produced nothing that was not material—the governments were both weak and arbitrary, and in spite of vaunted freedom, absence of caste prejudice, unlimited space, land-ownership almost for the asking, labor troubles were severe and life in general hard. Her boy was getting on.

She, too, had been getting on in these years; she had left Jim far behind—if anyone with views so chaotic could be said to be anywhere for more than a moment. George and she were destined to be together in thought one day, having such oneness of heart and sympathy, in spite of those recent divergencies that might only be long ways round to the same point. She drew a long sigh that was like a smile, the sweet sea-air and the cooling and calm of closing day had freshened her blood and brightened her eyes; but she still held the precious packet unopened in the reddening light and saw that the post-marked date was recent. There had been none of that lingering in post-offices characteristic of letters from Italy; he must have had her last with the news of her father's death; in another moment he might be here, her heart leaped at the thought, the letter was his harbinger.

The destroyers sat black and grim on the waveless azure,

a jarring note in the serene beauty; the row-boats, swarming round them and sending visitors up their sides, had thinned to specks here and there; the low, hushed thunder of the turning tide deepened; she gave one glance to the east, for he might even now come round that corner, the sunset glow on his face—he might! Then she opened and read; her hold on the paper tightened to a clutch; the faint rose fading left her face marble white and rigid; her eyes remained fixed on the pages. These were read more than once, as if to make quite sure of all the meaning, expressed or underlying the script. Yet she understood at the first line and knew at once that the contents were what she had long expected—and tried to ignore. The clear blue of the sea paled and then darkened; the black masses of the destroyers showed orange lights quivering faintly on the water; the hill grew black on a faintly rosed, chrysolite sky; the sea-voices rose on a mightier, fuller-chorused wave of consolation with the in-rolling tide; there was a keen edge in the salt sea-breath, that made the slight, still figure on the shadowed bench shiver and rise, putting the folded letter away as before, and turn slowly homewards in the lingering twilight.

It seemed a long, long time since she had run down to the sea with quickened pulse and freshened hope, and the hill path up which she had run once, pushing her protesting father in his wicker wheel-chair "just for fun," the man having been sent off for something, was much longer than it had been on that occasion and most unaccountably steep. She turned at the gate to take breath; a mist was creeping slowly in from the Channel; the world was gray and the sky—except for the fading chrysolite in the west—dim; there was no moon and the small, pale stars came out discouraged with slow, half-hearted reluctance; there was another note, almost a menace, in the great sea-symphony that grew ever fuller and stronger with the incoming tide. Her steps lingered be-

tween the scented garden-plots, where flower-faces, pale in the dusk, offered a wistful, unheeded welcome. On the gravel drive lay some white petals and bits of green, that had fallen from her father's coffin; she picked up a white carnation and a spike of tuberose, the heavy scent of which had something unbearable in it. George loved tuberoses.

The lamp was unlighted in the empty hall, where one of the general's hats still hung. She pushed open the drawing-room door and went in; there was a little glimmer from a sinking fire; bending shivering over it, she stirred a gay little flame, that leaped and danced in every corner and showed a tall and lance-like figure rising from a deep chair in the window, and coming with welcoming smile and outstretched hands to meet her.

"Hugh!" she cried, starting to her feet and looking into the grave face, marked with thought and intellect, and the truthful, level-glancing blue eyes, that could be hard as steel but were soft with sympathy and glowing with feeling now; "oh, Hugh!"

Here was solid rock to anchor on and a lasting friendship that would never fail. With a feeling of having come home to warmth and shelter from the chill and tumult of outer tempest, she took the outstretched hands with a burst of heart-easing tears and, drooping slowly forward, let her head rest on his shoulder, her face hidden. Deeply moved, he let her sob on, standing silent and steady under the light, sweet pressure of the buried face, and holding the quivering hands with a gentle clasp till the gust of emotion passed and she raised a wet face slowly and looked up with a smile of perfect trust.

"You took me by surprise," she said, slowly withdrawing her hands; "it was so good to see you." She stood in the flickering firelight that drew little flashes from the waves of her simply-bound hair and showed the slim grace of her

black-gowned figure. "We took it for granted that you could not be here in time."

He could not speak; the warmth and passion and utter trust of that clinging was a physical and moral obsession that set too many currents coursing.

"Where is George?" he said presently, with an effort not perceptible in the quiet, level voice.

The name stung and sent a tremor through her. "He is in Venice," she said, withdrawing into the shadow and turning to set the tuberose and carnation, thrown on a table when she came in, in water; and, though she spoke so quietly and with such indifference, the fine ear of passionate friendship detected something amiss and the question why George was not there remained unspoken.

"There's glorious news for you," he said, drawing up a low chair to the fire for her and standing looking down on her with his arm on the chimney-piece. "But first let me have yours—all that you care to tell. Who was here today—Jim and my father, no doubt, and Margaret? I made a sprint for it—but trains are trains and boats boats——"

"It was so good of you. He always thought everything of you and used to make me read him every word of your speeches and every mention of you in the papers—not that I wanted making. 'Mascott is the Coming Man,' he used to say."

"Your father was always too generous in his thoughts of me. I was deeply attached to him and valued his friendship very highly. I cut an important meeting for tonight in the north of Scotland but couldn't manage to start early enough, after all. I hope there was no suffering. How I shall miss him! He was too thorough a soldier to be a politician; but he had a pretty shrewd notion of how things were going in public affairs and a way of summing up a situation or a

personality in a phrase, that often threw sudden light upon vexed questions."

"He was not a party man, in short," she put in, looking up from her low chair, her head thrown back and resting on the cushion, and he saw life and returning interest in the eyes that had been so weary and discouraged, "those are the people who should govern the country, men without interest, without bias. In theory the Crown and the Upper Chamber; in those there should be no party."

"That is the part of the Crown alone. I suppose it is for that reason that we carefully deny any power to it."

The debate proceeded with animation, merging gradually in matters more personal; a servant bringing in a lamp was surprised and pleased at the change that the visitor had produced in her lady, there was such restfulness and content in the graceful figure reclining in the firelight, every outline clear in the severe simplicity of her plain black dress. The face Sylvia was looking up to was of the good blond English type, well-featured, clear-eyed, full of quiet power, sane intellect, geniality masked with reserve and the assured calm that comes of habitually dealing with great questions. His compact figure was lighter and he was less florid and finer of feature than is usual in that type; his simple and courteous manner, always assuming superiority of some kind in the person addressed, still had the tinge of command that comes from a habit of being obeyed; there was no weakness in the sensitive quiver of a mouth that could be firm as steel. So Sylvia thought with quickened observation, though she never quite lost her early impression of a slight, shy youth she had known intimately and liked much. He was changed, certainly, from the friend she had so long taken for granted, but, weighed and measured as a salvage from the wreck of life, he was not found wanting.

"Now for the good news," he said, when all she cared to

tell had been told and her heart lightened by his sympathetic interest. "You may have seen—or perhaps the papers have been neglected just lately—rumors of ministerial changes? No? Well, Shiftall resigns and it is an open secret that our grand old George is to have his place. Think of that. At his age!"

"No—not really?" She sat up and looked long and silently at the fire, her hand screening her face from the glow. "Is this certain?" she asked presently. "Does he know?"

"By this time, certainly. You will have a letter or telegram tomorrow, no doubt. But I wanted to have the pleasure of telling you myself, dear Sylvia, and offering my warmest congratulations. Well, they'll have a strong man in the Cabinet now. But for George, they'd never have turned us out. Waytansey owes him something in return. I'm glad he pays that debt."

"Well, you are very generous to your friend the enemy," she said in a strained voice; "when he's in the Ministry he'll pound you to atoms."

"I don't know. I'm not sure that Waytansey hasn't caught a Tartar this time. Besides, George is moving on. There's rough water ahead for him, when he finds it out and has no choice but to walk across to our side, as I am fairly sure he will. It's a bad bit, that crossing. His socialism has long been virtually chucked. Evidently he has given up the idea of the Leadership, and Labor will soon chuck him. But he will always be the People's Man. In the meantime we have our splendid young Labor king in the Cabinet—and, dear Sylvia, may I say it?—may I wish you the happiness so long delayed—my two best and dearest friends?"

She was glad the light was low and the lamp, just brought in, far back in the room.

"Wish him," she said, still looking into the fire and clasping her hands nervously and tightly together, "wish him all

happiness and success. But—you are under a misconception —thinking of something that no longer exists. George Darrell is my good friend and comrade—nothing more."

He was silent with utter stupefaction, looking inquiringly at the quiet, partly shadowed face that seemed to be studying the fire so intently.

"Nothing? Why, you made him. He is the monster, the magnificent monster, of your Frankenstein hand."

"I helped him," she corrected gently; "I helped him all I could. I was proud and glad to do so. It was a great privilege—a pleasure"—a deep sigh. "But that—engagement—was a mistake. He was grateful, deeply grateful, and I—I thought, as he thought in his vehement and passionate way, it was"—her voice gave way a little—"love——"

And Hugh was sure it was, on her part. He remembered too well that evening by the winter sea, while the shepherd boy was singing the carol by the sheepfold, and he heard in her clear, moved voice, "Ah! but there is," when he said there was no other man. But George? George, to love and leave, to promise and not perform. Could it be possible?

> Would it were I had been false, not you;
> I that am nothing, not you that are all.

That Sylvia could break faith was unthinkable. This explained too well why George was not here. He had never known, since that evening by the sea, of George's feeling for Sylvia, except by the way in which he avoided and stopped short any reference to her, and that made him certain.

"And it was love," he said. "How could it be otherwise? And it must be so still. He is a man of deep and strong feeling, a man to trust; silent, steadfast and strong. This is some misunderstanding, Sylvia, a little cloud that a word will clear away."

She shook her head with a smile sadder than tears.

"No cloud. A gradual drifting away from what might have been"—a catch of the breath—"a tragic mistake for both. He is so fiery and so imaginative, so—good-hearted and generous—he was so unused to the companionship and comradeship of women. He never had either mother or sister; all his boyhood no woman ever cared for him but that sour, hard old grandmother. Only think! she never kissed the poor child. I seemed, perhaps was, the only woman—except Margaret, who never quite understood him—the only woman in his life. We worked together on that paper—he wrote almost nothing without me—perhaps identified me with the cause—and so—he was very sorry for me one day when dear father nearly died—and that put the match to the powder, no doubt. In his imaginative way he wove a shimmering veil of romance and poetry about our intimacy—and—it seemed like the real thing for a time. Then by degrees the glow faded, his busy life and multiplied interests made the companionship impossible and the intimacy came to an end. But not the friendship, nor the gratitude it sprang from."

"And no one ever knew?"

"Only my father—not long before his death. It grieved him to think of leaving me solitary, so I had to tell him. He was very glad—oh, so glad!"—with a deep sigh, almost a sob.

"It will come right in time," he said gently.

"It has come right," she replied, looking up with a grateful smile to meet a gaze of infinite tenderness and compassion. "The mistake has been avoided and all is"—a little quick sigh—"well. All is well!"

"Another love," he said after a long silence, "offered long ago one afternoon in the Riviera—and again one evening by an English sea—was not founded on gratitude."

"No; but on pity. Pity for a silly girl whose little world

was tumbling about her ears because her father brought home a second wife. Long ago and long forgotten."

"Not pity, Sylvia, but the real thing, and that is immortal."

"No, Hugh, no, my dear. Let there be no more mistakes. You were too young then. I am too old now."

"You could never be too old or too young——"

"Let me keep my friend, my dear friend," she said in such distress as moved him. "We have been friends so long."

He looked at her in sad silence, only half divining how much she had borne that day, by the deep weariness and drooping lines in her face. "Friends then, always friends," he said presently with renewed gentleness. "Good-by, dear. God send you rest and peace tonight and forever."

He turned and left her with an aching heart and a backward glance, in which there was manly consent to inevitable sorrow and unspoken, unconscious reproach, and she stood alone in the silent, gleam-lit room, listening to the sound of a sharp-shut door and firm steps on the gravel. She looked at the flowers she had brought in and thought how much besides a father she had buried that day.

"George," she sighed to the empty air; "George." She thought of the dewy May morning when he had come out of all that sunny freshness, so gallant and gay and glad, and taken her to his heart and made her feel that she had come home forever. She thought of the first happy days of their engagement, with that double center for mind and heart—the people and the People's Man—her man, hers no more now; of the rich fullness of life, of her pride and joy in him and his victorious progress, of the hopes that grew with fulfillment. Through the silence she heard his voice, his careless, happy laugh—no one laughed so spontaneously, with such simple sincerity of heart-easing mirth as George—the firm ring of his quick elastic step, that would bring him to

her no more. Sadly came the memory of the first cooling, the gradual fading and long heart-sickness of deferred hope. And now at last the goal of his ambition was reached, the prize won—but not for her.

She saw that it must be so. There could be no human bride for a man of such high destiny. The People was his love; to them he was pledged; to them he would be true. Yet with pain and grief she had seen him decline from his first ideal purity, seen him soiled and stained with the mud and dust of political strife, debased to the world's low standard, though in the main holding to that early enthusiastic purpose. But he was not the noble, lofty character she had dreamed, while open-eyed to his frailties, the defects of his qualities and the drawbacks of his birth and breeding, but only a man of brilliant genius and forcible character, a subterman rather than a super-man, ambitious, capable, lovable always and good-hearted. The pure patriot, the high-souled statesman, the disinterested reformer, the man of spotless integrity and inviolate honor, deaf to personal ambition, unmoved by popular clamor, was yet to be found—if indeed any such could be found in the dust and din of these arid, soulless days, or anywhere outside the realm of dreams. All was gone now, youth, health and joy of life swept away in the wreck. But she had lived.

Did Hugh suspect what had passed between them?—she wondered. There was no friend like Hugh. To think of him was to be folded in an atmosphere of warmth and security. He had never failed her; he never would. His visit had been a strong cordial to a fainting heart. His voice had an echo of the infinite consolation sounding through the soft, low thunder of the in-rolling sea, that lulled her presently to a deep, dreamless sleep from which she rose refreshed next morning to write a calm and dignified reply to George, who had forgotten her in the triumph of a double success.

CHAPTER II

HUGH caught the late express to Victoria by the fraction of a minute, and was soon tearing through a dim world, dotted here and there with fiery pin-pricks and splashes and constellations of light, when the train was not rushing between two interminable walls of darkness. His compartment was empty, his cigar enjoyable, the sheaf of papers snatched from a strident boy on the platform glanced through and eviscerated in five minutes.

Then, clearly traced on the darkness, he saw two faces, the two most dear to him—Sylvia's, as just now in the glow of the newly stirred fire, pale with the weariness of crushed hope and fresh bereavement; Sylvia's in the first bloom of an ethereal beauty that defies analysis and endures through every change; hers, as on that Christmas evening by the moonlit sea, transfused with the white fire of pure passion; then again, as tonight, in the still and passionless pain of disillusion and shattered hope. He saw George's face, strong and vivid, with that engaging candor, fearlessly direct gaze and proud subconsciousness of power and intellect, his dark eyes aglow with a friendship "passing the love of women." And it was George who had stabbed that pure and loyal heart to the death. George! It could not be true; there must be a misunderstanding somewhere. Yet why had he never been open and aboveboard from the first? Anything subtle or secretive was quite out of harmony with the manly directness and admirable sincerity of his character. Reticence, *finesse,* even some economy of truth in public affairs and academic debate, were part of the intellectual equipment of a political

leader, but not native to the man himself. Yet there had been some startling discrepancies between his profession and practice of late. He had been so stoutly set against the payment of members in private. "The House would dwindle into a sort of debating society for hired flunkeys," had been his scornful comment on the possibility. Yet he had helped to carry the measure. "One has to play the game," he said. "Politics is a game of skill and chance; parties are the players. It has rules but no principles." It was becoming hard to know what he really thought. Even Sylvia admitted that she was sometimes at sea. And Sylvia loved him.

And George loved her, there was not the smallest doubt of that. Perhaps now that certainty of office was his with its emoluments, the good fortune would clear away any cloud of pride or hurt feeling on either side and all yet be well between these loved lovers. A Labor minister with a wife of good family, aristocratic traditions and no party bias, with Sylvia's intellect and charm and beauty; that would be rather fine. All these inconsistencies and discrepancies might be but the yeasty upheaval of maturing principles, and that Tory democrat dream of his own be fulfilled, bringing them on the same side, brothers in arms as in heart.

George's face looked at him from the wall of moving darkness with sad reproach; the innocent, beautiful boy-face, like the young St. John in the Pitti; the face of the brilliant and daring youth with its gracious, winning smile and vivid intellect. He heard the hearty laugh, the friendly voice; he felt the warm hand-clasp, the charm of manner. He saw George as once or twice he had seen him in the House, dauntless, inspirited equally by opposition, derision, cheers, interruptions, his clear voice ringing above the tumult in strong, well-balanced cadence, in denunciation, enthusiasm, clear argument, biting sarcasm, quick repartee. But always he had a vigorous lucidity of speech and confidence of manner,

that first calmed, then silenced, then chained in rapt interest both friend and foe—this lowly-born village boy, admitted on sufferance to his father's house to gratify his own childish whim. He saw him facing and quelling the infuriated rioters as on the day of the Great Strike, when the power of his magnetic personality tamed them and made them as reeds in the wind. How well had his own boyish admiration for this strong character and brilliant genius been justified; how true George had been through all change and all differences of political creed! There could be no real crookedness in him, whatever may have parted him from the true-hearted woman who undoubtedly loved him still as before. One must have faith in one's friends. A gentle, loving woman, however gifted, however clear of perception and sane of judgment, might not always, especially when as solitary and overthrown by grief as Sylvia, understand how deeply absorbed in public matters a man like George must be, or how difficult it was for him to indulge in the solace of private feeling at times of public crisis. He still felt—how he felt through all his musing—the pressure of her face on his shoulder and the quiver of her hand in his. It had been hard not to betray her trust. But he never would. She belonged to George; it was a double trust.

A couple of days later he was dining at Wycherley House. He had gone back to Scotland, whence his attempt to pay the last tribute to General Mostyn had called him, and where he had been expected on his way back from Norway to take part in an anti-Land Tenure Reform meeting. That duty done, he had just arrived at his town quarters, when Jim, accidentally running up against him, captured him and his father, and brought them home to dine, regardless of the house being still done up in holiday wrappers and only half the servants returned. Nobody really wanted more than a mutton-chop and a potato, Jim was used to say; and those

could be had at any time. Besides, as Margaret always carried the key of the cellar in her dispatch-box, they could have wine from any bin they chose, and with the Johannisberger his friends knew of, any food at all was a superfluity. Besides, fruit from the Wycherley gardens and forcing-houses was arriving daily; impossible to conceive of anything more exquisite from a gourmet's point of view than a dinner consisting entirely of nuts and fruit and wine.

"Office will do more than anything to bring George Darrell on," Lord Amberwood was saying at this extemporized feast. "And when he comes over to us, things will be done."

"No, Amberwood, no. George Darrell will never be on your side. He'll always stick to his colors," said Jim, who never stuck to any, his own colors being too nebulous, and his interest in politics too spasmodic, for human perception; "he will always be on the side of the People."

"Well! So we all are here," said Lord Amberwood, who was enjoying something more artistic than a plain chop. "Only we work it one way and Darrell another."

"Playing with words," Margaret said; "Jim means it with a big P and that means the hand-working classes."

"Well! Granting your big P, Margaret, we are all on their side; but we recognize the existence of other classes as well. We don't want to favor one class at the expense of another, and that's what Darrell has always declared for. The working-classes have only rights—all others only duties—for his school. Fancy his coming round to the principle of game laws."

"George Darrell—the People's Man—tolerating game laws?" Jim was aghast.

"He was shooting with us at Deerham," Hugh said with some amusement.

"Yes, Jim; over the very ground where he had more than once been caught red-handed poaching. He recalled it with

gusto. 'And, after all, it was as much thieving as sneaking a hen from a farm-yard,' he acknowledged. So it is, as I said in the House the other day."

Margaret threw back her head with a joyous laugh: "Oh, I remember, I remember," she exclaimed. "You said it much too well. How I wished I'd been a peer to stand up to you."

"Calling it theft is begging the question," Jim declared; "all property is theft."

"Let us hope then there is honor among theives, Jim. No; Darrell wants game laws, he's a born sportsman, but he wants reformed game laws; he wants to nationalize hares and partridges and let everybody shoot, that's the difference. That was his latest idea. If you follow his speeches and writings from the beginning——"

"Which Heaven forbid," Margaret muttered.

"——you will find a continuous trend of thought to our side. He mellows as he grows more familiar with reality and practical knowledge of affairs. But—perhaps one ought hardly to say it in this house—what *are* his real convictions? and how far does he follow them?"

"For the matter of that," Margaret returned, "how far does anybody, and how can any party man?"

"Has party loyalty no limit?" asked Hugh. "Is it abject slavery? Can't a man be true both to self and party? It would be a sordid game to play, if it were not so."

"And it is a sordid game," Jim decided, with his usual finality. "When it is a game, then it's good-by to principle."

"As it chiefly is," Margaret maintained. "Well, there are two people, one in each House, both friends of mine, who have clean hands and do not gamble away national and imperial interests for place and power, but I should be very sorry to answer for any of the rest, certainly not for our admirable

George, though I always liked the boy. He has a steep hill to climb and can't be over nice."

"Come now, Margaret, is that quite fair?" Hugh asked. "Here is a young man, still quite young, dragged up in a cottage, without family, friends, influence, education or any other advantage, by sheer force of genius and intellect not only a minister of the crown at an unprecedented age, but already a power, a positive, moving intellectual and moral force in the state for years past. No opportunism there. A popular, *the* popular leader—mis-leader, if you will—but a leader, a man—no time-serving demagogue—not only by force of character and mental grasp, but by the power of genuine enthusiasm for those he leads and loves and is loved by. Our glorious George, weaknesses and faults he may have, but he's magnificent, a great national splendor. Let us drink his health, may we, Jim, in your best Johannisberger, worthy even of him?"

"The People's Minister, the Right Honorable George Darrell," cried Jim, springing to his feet, seizing a long, slender bottle, drawing the cork and sending the golden gladness fizzing in creamy overflow into the glasses. "Hurrah for the People's Minister. May he destroy capital, abolish wealth and rank, and give us government by the People and for the People."

"May he keep his head and moderate his ambition," said Margaret.

"May he mend his ways and come over to us," added Lord Amberwood. "And may he put a bit in Waytansey's mouth and a spur in his flank. The good Waytansey thinks he's done the trick this time and muzzled and chained up the wolf in the fold. But I shouldn't be surprised if he finds he's caught a Tartar."

"'No friends?' I wonder what our admirable Crichton would have done without the present company, self excepted,"

he said later, "and above all without Sylvia Mostyn? How proud she will be! Poor girl, she's taking her father's death hard. This will be a little fillip for her. What's she going to do? A woman ought to have a settled home. The world is no place for women to knock about alone in."

"That's what I told her," Jim assented sadly. "We both tried to persuade her to come back to us, but she knows there's no secretary work for her here, unless Miss Chapman is sent off. So then, 'why shouldn't you marry me?' I said. 'On the other hand, why should I?' says she. I told her she might do it out of personal kindness to an old friend, but she didn't seem to see it."

"You asked—Sylvia—to marry you?" Margaret gasped, "and never told me? Really, Jim, really!"

"Well, Madge, I knew you'd put me off it if I did. And it took some doing and I'm glad I did it. There was just an off chance she'd say yes, and I should have grizzled all my life long over it if I'd let it slip."

"I never heard such a thing in my life," she continued, looking in blank amazement before her, "Sylvia!"

"I respect your brother's courage, Margaret," said Lord Amberwood, with rather unstable gravity, "and heartily wish he could have pulled it off."

"Oh, so do I, of course. It's the magnitude of the enterprise and the unexpectedness that staggers me."

"Thundering cheek," mused Jim with gentle complacence. "Just think of the people she must have refused!"

"There are some delightful biographies of George," Hugh suddenly said, looking up from a peach that had taken a good deal of peeling. "In one he was left on somebody's doorstep, yelling with a vigor prophetic of his oratorical powers and masterfulness. In another he tied books on to plow-handles, and got slanged for crooked furrows. Then he

tramped all the way to town, slept in railway arches, starved for days together and worked for a sweater."

"And that was not all fiction," Margaret said abstractedly. She was still contemplating her brother with mingled admiration and amazement. "Why not try again, Jim dear?" she added softly.

"The difference of age is on the right side," Lord Amberwood urged.

Jim was ready with his quotation. "'So sways she level in her husband's heart.'"

"She wouldn't so much mind the beastly title or the wretched property," he mused; "but you couldn't expect her to put up with me. I've no genius for life; I can't fit myself into the brutal realities of the hurly-burly. Margaret knows that and lets me live in my own ideal world, while she makes all the compromises you have to make with the infernal hullabaloo that nobody ever seems to have been able to put straight since the beginning of time. Madge does it for both of us, like the gallant lass she is; she steers me along somehow. By *me,* I mean the visible husk that conceals the immortal ideality no man can really know or conceive of. Madge has a talent amounting to genius for living. So has Sylvia. They move among and manipulate these outward shows with marvelous delicacy and skill; they discern the inner lights; they see through the shadows and are not blinded by them; they walk through the miry ways of earth unstained. It is inborn genius. Darrell has it in an extraordinary degree. If anyone can put the tempestuous chaos of the social maelstrom straight it is he—or such as he. Pass the bottle, Hugh. What's our next job this autumn?" As Jim saw no papers, talked at no clubs and only took an occasional interest in politics, he seldom knew what was going on.

"Disintegration. But we are going to make a good fight

for it. And their great land measure. Rank socialism, Jim. It'll do your heart good, and nobody any particular harm, as it will never come to anything. George thinks they may go so far as to accept the principle. I doubt if even he hopes more yet."

"At any rate, there will be one straightforward man in the Cabinet who knows his own mind. Nothing secretive, no subtlety or compromise there." Lord Amberwood looked with a confident smile at Hugh for agreement, which came warmly from Margaret.

But Hugh was silent. He thought of Sylvia's face in the firelit dusk at Eastbourne. Why not open and aboveboard? Ah! why not?

He was very busy with his father that autumn, helping to carry on the party campaign up and down the country; but when the time to shoot pheasants arrived, they both found a few days' leisure for that pastime. And one crisp October morning, beginning modestly, veiled in silvery mist shot with lilac, and blazing out later into gold and azure, with rich splendor of ruddy orchard fruit and burning flame of beech, crimson creeper and dogwood, saw them with a small and rather scattered party tramping over turfy downland from plantation to plantation, till the sunny midday, sweet with the smoke of burning weeds and still sea-air, drew them to a luncheon awaiting them on the sunny side of a copse in a sheltered dip of the down, above the sea that slept with faintly audible breath on the pebbled shore below.

Time had brought changes to Lord Amberwood since Hugh's school-days. The manhood and various interests of his sons had dispersed the creeping discouragement and disillusion of middle-age and renewed his own youth, while self-denying economy, fortunate investments and unexpected inheritance, had rescued him from the straitened circumstances of earlier days; his daughters had married well, and

as yet no son had disappointed him, except in the minor matter of Hugh's continued bachelorhood, which was largely compensated for by Cecil's brilliant match and sturdy little sons; so he had taken heart and thrown himself into public life once more, content to forego the early hope of seeing a Mascott again at the ancestral home and the old purpose of saving his order, for the larger aim of rescuing the nation and the great empire built upon it from disintegration and ruin.

He had earned the titles "Die-hard" and "Last Ditcher," when his Chamber, the reform of which he had constantly urged, was overthrown and gagged; he still kept his flag flying in the select debating society to which that august assembly had been reduced by a despotic and usurping oligarchy. He was one of the founders of the Preservation League, a great national movement, spreading among the thinking classes and penetrating even to the more temperate-minded of the hand-working and lower middle-classes. This had for aim to resist complete overthrow of that stronghold of national freedom, the British constitution, and arrest the disintegration of the empire founded upon the freedom slowly won through centuries of conflict.

He liked to be called a Tory democrat, though in spirit he was neither a Tory nor a democrat. He disliked and distrusted democracy, but he saw that it was there and could not be ignored, but must be made the best of, its wild caprices and unbridled energies restrained and directed, and its strange but inevitable impulse to cast itself beneath the tyranny of an oligarchy or an autocrat, controlled. Hugh was an apostle of the League gospel and both father and son looked forward to the gradual evolution of a great new political party composed of democratic Conservatives, Liberal Unionists and Imperialists, all fighting under one banner to resist disintegration and tyranny, whether of parliament, cabinet, or people. These principles had brought them into frequent

personal conflict with George Darrell. By long practice Lord Amberwood had developed a sober and solid style of speaking, seldom enlivened by flashes of wit or poetic passion, but sincere and straightforward, with a quiet, sledge-hammer stroke that had more than once destroyed the brilliant sword-fence and broken through and dispersed the woven subtleties and vivid eloquence of the People's Man. Jim had never enjoyed anything more, so he said, than a debate during which Hugh and George had been pitted against each other. His heart was with George, but he admired the good, bold, direct strokes of Hugh, whose oratory, like his father's, was plain and simple, but often fused by passion to a still white heat and illuminated by occasional flashes of imaginative insight.

In this sunny, hazy autumn peace these things were gladly put aside, and even the sight of a long gray battleship steaming over the quiet sea was felt as an intrusion, recalling those questions of national defense then so disturbing to thoughtful and patriotic minds, and so uninteresting to the mass of light-hearted Britons, who regard the universe as an airy and unimportant joke and bodily sports as the only serious thing in it.

Hugh, who was listening to a discussion on the unexpected scarcity of pheasants in a cover into which many had been driven the night before, was wondering if Sylvia would appear by the plantation side with the luncheon; Lord Lisfearne, totally absorbed in the pros and cons of this grave pheasant question, was presenting his father-in-law, who was contentedly thinking about nothing at all, with a large assortment of excellent advice. This young man was a Liberal Unionist with leanings towards socialism; his love for democratic principle was only exceeded by the excellence of his game-keeping. Of this he was quite unaware, though firmly conscious that his covers always did what was expected of

them and secretly inclined to be contemptuous of Amberwood's slackness and tolerant dealing with poachers.

Hugh's face brightened when a slender figure in black was discovered round the corner of the plantation, among the tweed-suited ladies scattered upon improvised seats on the turf, and he lost no time in coming to anchor by the upturned hamper on which the friend he wished to see was sitting and welcoming him with a grave smile.

Since her father's death she had been undergoing the treatment usual after long and depressing mental strain, rest and change and cheerful tranquillity. She was now supposed to be so far cured as to be able to face the ordinary wear and tear of life, though the means she had taken to this end, filling the place of the matron of a gratuitous nursing-home at a remote seaside hamlet during her autumn holiday, her friends thought a little singular. "But," as Lady Amberwood said the night before, "Sylvia is not like the common run; there is a distinction in everything she does. Most people would think they had had enough of nursing and illness and monotony, after being shut up alone with a dying father for several months; few would extract a great amount of cheerfulness from the exclusive society of the sick poor, or find repose in taking the entire working responsibility of a charitable institution. But Sylvia is different. She looks perfectly charming tonight and is as interesting and pleasant as if she had never seen a doctor, a patient or anything horrid and disgusting, in her life. And best of all she doesn't want to talk about the place—one of Jim and Margaret's inventions—as most people do when they have done anything dreadful and heroic."

"Save me from my friends," Hugh thought, but he knew that his mother loved Sylvia better than she understood her, and gave her a warmer good-night kiss than usual, as a reward.

Through the cheerful buzz of intimate talk, popping corks and easy laughter, came the tinkle of sheep-bells in hazy sunshine that turned the soft, fleecy backs moving together to gold; a shepherd was seen staking out hurdles on the opposite slopes; farther down in the hollow, a man was guiding a horse plow through stubble, the steel share glittering in the sun, as it turned the violet-gray soil from the furrow; larks sang intermittently overhead; now singly, now in exulting chorus, the low, responsive murmur of the sea came from below. Sylvia listened with pensive pleasure and thought of the picnic tea under the olives on the mountain ridge and the man and woman toiling up the steep mule-path the day she had been so sad about her father's marriage. She wondered what sort of home the shepherd had and if his days on remote downs and nights in wheeled huts were very lonely; if the plowman's labor gave him any pleasure; what interests these men had, and how all the beauty and peace they worked in affected those who labored hand in hand with Nature under the open sky.

Hugh remembered that this was the slope up which George had dashed to Deerswell Leap to rescue him. Sylvia remembered that too, and the lulling sound of the surf and warm, misty gold of autumn sun brought her such a glow of hope and gladness that she thought that George's warm, true heart must still be hers, and a day must dawn when her prodigal would come back to her, as he had come that bright May morning, and all be well.

"Where *is* George?" Hugh suddenly asked, as if divining her thoughts.

"Who knows? He might be coming round the corner of the plantation even now," she replied. "It was Liverpool the night before last. A great speech and a most riotous meeting."

"George Darrell's?" Lord Lisfearne asked from the other

side of the hamper. "Yes, he is coming on. His troubles are about to begin. It was rotten oranges at Liverpool, it will be stones before long."

"I wonder how his Labor friends like *The Ideal Statesman?*"

"In this week's *Without Prejudice?* Well, if he lives up to that they ought to give thanks fasting. Pity to bring precept and practice into such a strong contrast. It will be cast up against him all his life. Everybody is talking about it."

"It's hardly his touch, Lisfearne," Hugh objected. "Too much aloof from life, too academic, with a distinct anti-democratic bias. What do you think, Sylvia?"

"I think he may never have seen or heard of it. The sub-editor is in sole charge. If anyone is the culprit, I am."

"You plead guilty to *The Ideal Statesman,* Sylvia?" said Lord Amberwood. "Did you hear, Evelyn? That's how she has been resting from playing at a hospital matron's trivial duties. High time to enjoy the stimulus of seeing a few honest fellows at serious work with guns, eh? Well, Sylvia, Darrell will endorse your Statesman, my dear. He's strong enough. Give me a strong man, who knows what he wants and where and who he is. You can do nothing with these slippery shifters."

"And so charming," Violet said, "so perfectly delightful to the Suffragettes the other day. They all had pepper ready for him in their pockets. They had his wishes, and should have all his votes, he said, but he was only the seven hundred and somethingth part of the House. If they had hearts, they would let him go on. So they blew him kisses instead and saved the pepper for Mr. Waytansey, who has done nothing but sneeze ever since. He must be one of the handsomest men in the House. Pity he can never marry."

"But why not, Vi?" Hugh asked.

"Well, Hugh, who *could* he marry? He's too big for his own class and too little for any other."

"My dear child," Lord Lisfearne said, "such a man is above class. But a wife might be a clog and keep him back."

"Not at all," Lady Amberwood said. "It's just what he wants to help him on. Where would Disraeli and Gladstone have been without their wives?"

There was a laugh from the other side of the tablecloth, where the youngest Mascott boy was doing battle with a wasp over some jam puffs. "And the best of it is," he cried, "that Darrell is married all the time."

"What nonsense are you talking now, Dickie?" his mother exclaimed.

Dickie was too busy putting the wasp out of action to reply at once. A very large acorn took the opportunity of the silence to fall plump into somebody's glass with a liberal splash of pale ale, another came drumming upon a sunshade, and bounding thence to the cloth; a robin's song seemed to Sylvia to take a note of sudden sadness, and a low voice of consolation from the hushed surf below grew faint and plangent before Dickie had made certain that the wasp was finished and asked if no one had seen the *Times* that came over with the lunch-baskets. Whereupon the paper was promptly appropriated and the announcement, labeled Darrell-Errisson, read out with notes of exclamation by Lady Amberwood.

"At Southampton! Quietly! So it appears—very much so. No, Gerald, no mistake: The Right Honorable George Darrell, please observe. There can't be two Right Honorables—though I give you George Darrells to any amount. Widow—mark that, my friends—widow of the late Colonel Nathan B. Errisson, U. S. Army."

"Poor chap!" sighed the goodhearted Lisfearne.

Hugh dared not look at Sylvia. Instead, he stared with dazed eyes at the sun-steeped slope, up which George had dashed that day and rescued him, and where he had stood on the moonlit Christmas evening and offered himself a second time to Sylvia. How they had both loved George! It was a relief presently to hear in her silver, clear, quiet voice: "Who *was* Lady Arabel Errisson?"

"Ah! who on earth was she?" Lord Amberwood echoed. "Is there a Lady Arabel anybody? Odd for a peer's daughter to have no father."

"The People's Man is ashamed of his noble relative," Lisfearne suggested. "He might even be a duke. That would be the lion lying down with the lamb and no mistake. The party would never stand that."

"At Southampton," mused Mr. Hervey, who had fallen in with the shooters in one of his pastoral rounds. "George lived there for some time. An early love-affair, very likely. Had you heard of any such thing, Miss Mostyn?"

"Why, he would certainly have told you, Sylvia," Lady Amberwood said. "You seem to have heard the whole of his biography."

"No," she replied with a little smile, "I have heard nothing of this lady."

"It's a hoax, of course," Hugh said.

"Jim will faint with horror," Lady Amberwood added. "The pile left to George Darrell by the Ball's Soap widow was nothing to this. Besides, the thought that the soap money is all for the cause consoled him. But nothing could excuse a duke's daughter, or even an earl's."

"I always had a sneaking kindness for the young villain," mused Mr. Hervey, to whom more than to anybody the young villain owed his good fortune, "and shall always be interested in him. But I'm afraid it's a case of vaulting

ambition. I wish he had told some of us. The honeymoon is nearly done by this time."

"The honeymoon." Sylvia winced but not too slightly for the man who loved her to perceive.

"The whole thing is a hoax, a stupid hoax, much too absurd to be true," he declared angrily; "Lady Arabel too. An impossible name. Oh, yes, any name is possible in America, but people are never born ladies there."

And when the shooters came home towards dusk, Violet told Hugh with some amusement that the peerage had been ransacked from end to end during the afternoon, and no Lady Arabel discovered in it.

"Which shows that the whole thing is a rag," he said conclusively to Sylvia, who only gave a little negative smile and turned to resume her play with Violet's children.

But she had many thoughts far from these innocent diversions.

"I loved him! oh, how I loved him!" she kept repeating to herself. It seemed to her that something vital was crushed within her and that many stars had faded out of the sky.

CHAPTER III

WHILE George was reading the fateful letter on the Riva that afternoon, he was not aware that a pair of bright, observant eyes were following his movements intently, still less that the smart lady's maid chatting coquettishly with a waiter in a corner by the staircase had taken careful notice of him when he came in for a moment before going to St. Mark's.

No sooner had this damsel watched him out of the house, than she left the beguiled and saddened waiter and ran up to a landing window, that commanded the broad pavement as far as the Piazzetta, into which she saw the People's Man turn and disappear with apparent satisfaction to herself. Then, slowly turning away, she went to her mistress's room, which she entered without knocking, and subsided in an easy attitude upon an invitingly cushioned *chaise longue,* taking up an English paper that lay there and running her eye down the columns.

"Well?" asked Lady Arabel sharply; "has he seen it?"

"Don't think he has. Didn't he say he was off papers this trip?" the maid returned indifferently, not raising her eyes from the journal.

"Oh, men say things. My hair must be dry by this time, Louise. Do make haste, the afternoon will be gone."

"And so won't he—trust him! My, if you ain't impatient."

Slowly and languidly she rose and went to her mistress, who was sitting in a low-backed chair, with a golden shower of hair rippling over her shoulders upon a bath towel that

protected a much tucked and frilled dressing-gown of silk and lace from the damp and glittering tresses. One of "Gyp's" least edifying novels was tossed from the lady's hand with an imprecation upon its *jeune personne* vapidity, her features were expressive of unwilling martyrdom.

"This fluid ain't up to much," Louise observed, gathering the sticky masses of hair together and brushing them with light-handed skill; "a thought too goldish. Best send to Paris for the other. If you don't hold stiller, I reckon you'll be tweaked."

"Oh, shut your head, for the land's sake. Where is he?"

"Off to his blessed Piazza. He'd have taken a gondola or a vaporetto at the Molo if he'd been going anywhere else. The letter was official—he read it over more than once. A cat at a mouse-hole was not in it with his face reading. The other letter was nothing—some woman, likely. He wasn't over keen on that."

"Ah, his saintship! Well? Try those puffs over the ears again and keep the forehead clear—his saintship!"

"He asked for trains. The manager gave him a through Milan, St. Gothard and Bale-Laon, tomorrow."

"He's off then, and you fooling about as if one could count upon years. That puff is too high, Louise, and the pin pricks. Wake up, wake up. You're sure he isn't off already?"

"Too late. Nothing to catch till tomorrow. Besides, he took no luggage. Bless you, he'd only just got his mail and read it out there by the sea."

"I thought there was something between him and Wyvering that day. They sat so long—two solid hours."

"And all politics. I couldn't get to hear exactly what. How about the crushed strawberry veiled with black? The sea-blue would be cooler and the hat with osprey and blue touches simpler."

"I wonder if Wyvering *did* recognize me? He looked at me hard enough, in spite of my fan."

"They all do that. And you were in that sea-green and gold over white, with emeralds. You make them all turn in that."

"It was a long time ago. In Vienna. I was darker then and he had hardly begun to grizzle. A touch of gray never comes amiss to a well-groomed man. It gives such distinction."

"He wasn't a bad sort, Wyvering. How he hated the Count! My, if you ain't dressed to kill this time!" She stood with her hands on her hips, critically contemplating the result of her labors. "This'll do the trick."

"Give me some fresh gloves, Louise. And don't talk like that; remember who you are."

"I remember well enough. I'm Lady Arabel Errisson's maid. Yes, m'lady, that's so." She made a curtsey and put on a prim, inanimate face. "And I've played worse parts in my time, eh?"

"You never played a part worse than you have this last day or two, Louise. Remember Buda-Pesth. I don't want that over again. Yesterday, for example, before *him.*"

"Oh, Zorzi! don't you worry about Zorzi. He's a daisy, greener than a raw cabbage, simpler than sugar-candy. If you said you were the Queen of Sheba, he'd swallow it without making a face."

"Zorzi is a very clever man, Louise, though a born fool in some things. The worst of these geniuses is you never know where their sharpness will come out, however idiotic they may seem. And if you don't take care, Louise, you'll give the whole show away as you did before. Yes"—she turned herself slowly this way and that before the long mirror in the wardrobe—"it isn't bad; simple, quite simple; the eyelids perhaps a thought too black. No—just the right

pensive touch. He took the estates very quietly, didn't ask too many questions. Pity you're not a Catholic, Louise, you could run into one of these churches and put in a word for me. It would do no harm. By the way, I promised to show him the maps and documents this evening, so get out the dispatch box, and everything ready. And find out all you can about that detestable old English cat, who is always spying about, and keep her off us if you can."

"Trust me," she mumbled, striking a match on her shoe for the cigarette in her mouth. "Ta, ta!"

"You'll do the trick this time, Belle, my girl," she thought, watching the floating elegance along the sunny Riva till the blue and white sunshade vanished beyond the bridge; "who'd ever think she was a day over thirty? Might pass for twenty with that veil—or at night, properly made up, as I do it. Zorzi, you sawney."

Lady Arabel did not return to her hotel that evening until after ten, when she went straight to her room with intelligence that filled the maid, dutifully awaiting her there, with such joy that she danced a quick shuffle on tip-toe twice round the room, ending in the middle on one foot, with the other poised high and extended at right angles to her body, that bent down over the other side, with arms gracefully flung over the head.

"Now for the fizz, m'lady," she cried, regaining a more conventional posture. "Veuve Cliquot! I think I shall take to the boards again, after all."

Lady Arabel, who was thoughtfully contemplating her image in the glass, while slowly divesting herself of gloves, veil and hat, suddenly burst into a peal of laughter. "Oh, my dear Daisy!" she exclaimed, recovering herself; "fancy, Louise, he's only been in love three times before."

"Poor chap, what he's missed!"

"Once with the baker's girl. He was thirteen. She was

eighteen and had red arms. She sold him bulls'-eyes and good advice over the counter. Once with a Sunday school teacher. She made him go to church and taught him manners. Once with a lovely and gifted being, whom the angels call goodness knows what; she seems to have taught him everything he ever knew—except cheek—and to have been far too good for anything; some stuck-up, blue-stocking miss, I suppose. Poor dear Daisy! He really is too sweet for words. But mind you, he's no fool in some things; as I said, the worst of that sort is you never know where their cleverness will turn up. Five thousand a year is a pretty decent screw. One might do a good deal with that, Lou. Gondolas by moonlight do play old Harry with one's complexion. I look a perfect fright. We'll try the mask to-night. I fancied I felt a mosquito on that beastly balcony. Oh, confound your Cliquot! Ring for it and be done, will you?"

While they drank their Cliquot in their room, George was pacing up and down below by the water's edge, with a cigar in his lips. His cheek was flushed, his hand tremulous, his head whirling. He would have liked to fling himself into the sea, as he often did when a boy, and let it bear him away and away and toss and play with him and cool the fever in his blood, perhaps forever—yes, forever. For what was it all worth, after all—the fever, the fret, the petty, futile strife? But this still blue lagoon was not the great gray, white-crested Channel he loved, and this lighted, laughter-filled terrace was no still, dark solitude at the foot of breezy downs; and it was life, some stronger, fresher, nobler life, and not extinction, one really yearned for. He had taken more wine than he was used to, and, though habitually abstemious, he rather prided himself upon being able to take more than most men. He was inebriated by more than wine tonight, yet torn by a poignant sense of loss and longing and the loneliness of a success in the joy of which

there was no one to share. He longed for the mother he had never known, and the cherished childhood he had never enjoyed; he longed for he knew not what.

He went up the steps of the bridge between the palace and the prison, leaned on the balustrade, baring his throbbing forehead to the fresher breeze there, and watched the moon-touched water slide smoothly beneath the Bridge of Sighs. What men must have suffered in the past, what they must suffer in the present! For the mass of mankind there is nothing but the long, dull strain of labor and thought against baffling waves or the still duller drifting with the current; to one or two there comes a flash of rapture, a crown of success, "one crowded hour of glorious life"; but the hour flies, the crown crumbles to dust, the flash passes and leaves a deeper dark than before.

All had come to him; the solitary cottage boy, unwanted, untaught, was virtually one of the rulers of a state greater and more glorious by far than that governed by the men who had lived and ruled so superbly in the carved and pictured magnificence gleaming in the moonlight before him. And all by force of his own genius and effort, still in the flower and promise of life, before the wheels began to run down or the taste for joy to wane. Loved, too, and by such a woman, with such fire and passion and perfect self-surrender, with a love that unlocked new worlds and revealed unimagined possibilities of enjoyment. He had never lived till now; happiness he had known, enjoyment never. How much he had lost by that too ethereal passion, on which the native joy-hunger had so long starved and one half his nature was slowly atrophying! Yet he wanted to flee away and be at rest.

Feeling for something in a pocket, he drew out a folded paper and held it up in the moon-rays. It was Sylvia's letter, the same that he had read by the doge's tomb in St.

Mark's in the afternoon. He started as if stung at the sight and tore it quickly to pieces and dashed them into the water, where they floated slowly on the incoming tide, till a lighted gondola, with silk-sashed gondoliers and gay young people singing, passed over and effaced them.

Then he turned, feeling as if he had killed a living creature, and went back to the hotel, to his correspondence, which lasted far into the night. A distance of more than hours, more than many years, yawned between that afternoon and the evening that followed it.

Next morning an empty screened corner in the writing-room was found in comparative privacy for the discussion of matters connected with estates, the title to which was disputed, and of certain money that Lady Arabel Errisson had been fraudulently deprived of, her claims to which her cavalier was naturally pledged to support and substantiate. To this end a pleasant hour, scented with tuberose and charged with magic of glowing glances, soft accidental touches and murmured musical speech, was spent before a table strewn with plans and documents, neatly labeled and beautifully endorsed.

Louise, who was on guard, fine needlework in hand, ready to fetch and carry and give warning of the approach of listeners—an occupation much too boring for a temperament so strongly disposed to enjoyment and light diversion—managed with native dexterity to extract some gleams of amusement even from this.

"So unfortunate, Zorzi *mio,*" she heard her mistress murmur, "that our happiness should come just at the moment of your promotion, when you must be so busy. It fills me with shame to intrude my stupid little affairs upon a magnificent intellect that ought to be occupying its great powers with affairs of state."

"O Lord!" the cavalier's voice rang out with his joyous

laugh; "if a chap did happen to have such a thing, it couldn't be too magnificent for the affairs of his queen. Queens are above states, darling."

Louise remembered to sneeze delicately, but quite distinctly, at this juncture. "I rather like this Zorzi," she said to herself, "he's such a hopeless donkey and so completely wasted on Belle. I might have netted him myself—only I should have had no use for him. Somehow I couldn't spite Zorzi; 'twould be like hitting a kid. He isn't like the beasts the rest of them are," and the queen's affairs, which were of a somewhat intricate nature, bewildering even to the magnificent intellect investigating them, were resumed with fresh diligence and delight.

There followed a few days of blissful intoxication, a brief stay at Desenzano, two days at Como, with a pause at Lucerne, whence George went at express speed to London and Lady Arabel followed more leisurely, with an interval for re-fitting in Paris, to Southampton, where the marriage took place three or four weeks after the acquaintance began at Venice.

Exigencies of state made the new minister's honeymoon a rather fragmentary delight, besides withdrawing his attention from one or two circumstances for which he was entirely unprepared—among them the total want of interest in her marriage evinced by Lady Arabel's aristocratic relatives, another, an absence of ready money necessitating an early application to himself for petty cash, hardly to be expected from a lady of exalted rank and considerable property. But the hours available for domestic happiness were too brief and precious to be wasted on things of slight importance like these.

The blissful, almost too honeyed moon was waning fast, when the People's Man, running down to the week-end rest at Brighton, solaced himself with a back number of his own

Without Prejudice, to an article in which his attention had more than once been drawn that week, and which had even been attributed to himself, entitled *The Ideal Statesman.*

> "Who if he rise to station of command,
> Rises by open means, and there will stand
> On honorable terms or else retire.
> . . . . . .
> Who comprehends his trust and to the same
> Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim."

He had since heard that it was written in ignorance of his promotion, though not without some anticipation of it, and with full assurance that the writer's ideals were shared with him. The article set forth in the clear and pleasantly imaginative style he had always loved and delighted in, all the more because it was Sylvia's, the essentials of the Statesman's character and mental quality. Like Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior," when called upon to face

> "Some awful moment to which heaven hath joined
> Great issues,"

he must be

> "Happy as a lover and attired
> In sudden brightness, like a man inspired."

George had prided himself upon this "sudden brightness," and reddened as he read.

"Just how one feels," he had told Sylvia more than once, and they had often agreed that indecision, or even the faintest shadow of hesitancy, was one of the worst vices in a ruler, whose mind must be able to see all the bearings and pros and cons of every possible course of action, and choose the best of them in a flash. That was his distinguishing quality; next, perhaps, came the power to "turn his necessity to glorious gain." Misused, neglected, these might be, but never destroyed; they were immanent in character and mental

fiber. These qualities, the article set forth, with faithfulness to trust, singleness of aim, power to rise above the seductions of wealth and honor, were essential and fundamental. Further, the statesman must know men and books, but men more than books and cities more than men. He must be acquainted with past centuries, else he cannot understand his own, and capable of foreshadowing those to come, else he cannot mend the present age. His intellect must be commanding and well trained, his imagination sympathetic and creative. He must have intuitive perception of individual and national character, but especially of national. His will must be steady and strong; his self-command absolute; his energy and power of prolonged and concentrated effort beyond the common; and he must possess, at least in some degree, the personal magnetism that charms and subdues men when backed by strong will. Finally the statesman must yield neither to clamor of party nor turbulence of faction, be moved neither by the sophisms of demagogues nor the menace of the powers in being, nor by any personal passion or interest; but, unfettered by class prejudice, unspotted by lust of gain or promotion, unawed by criticism or possibility of failure stand like "an ever-fixed mark, that looks on tempest and is never shaken," securely based upon the impregnable rock of principle, walled round by knowledge and judgment, casting far upon the tempestuous billows of national and international politics the clear and steady glow of disinterested and enlightened patriotism.

A charming paper, he thought, highly characteristic of the writer, who was never made—if a being so ethereally pure and imaginative could have been made at all and was not rather some celestial effluence—for the rough and tumble of real life. All about her breathed an exquisite idealism, an air too rarefied for a man of warm blood and plain common sense, the atmosphere of "the high that proved too high,

the heroic for earth too hard." He had broken free at last from that exacting influence; he breathed common, life-giving air and was strong. But the rarefied air, if difficult, had been sweet—how sweet! And though one might see better by the light of common day, the glamour of that dream-light had made meanest things lovely and exalted.

Doubtless the portrait so unlike himself of the Ideal Statesman was the last counsel of his Egeria, embodying all they had aspired to and sheathing a stinging reproach. And if, as seemed probable, it were to be attributed to him, so much the better. But the real statesman must match the world he lived in. It was not a good world; but there were solid joys, warm luxuries and tumultuous pleasures in it; there were kingdoms, principalities and powers—but not Sylvia, nor peace, nor any lasting joy.

The train rolled into the station and discharged its living freight against a line of taxis and cabs; and there, all sweetness and warm welcome, golden-haired and richly-furred, was a wife fit for a king, moving with her superb bearing to meet him, draw him into a taxi and whirl him, luxuriously buried in fur rugs, through the sharp sweetness of autumnal air to the great, blazing, gilt-balconied barrack on the front, by the moaning sea, that echoed the great sigh in his heart for something forever lost.

The shore lights made splashes of tremulous gold on the vast gray darkness without; and, amid the glitter of innumerable electric jets and hum of voices within, the sound of violin, 'cello, and viola, with pearly showers of pianoforte notes, drowned the sea's sad complaining in triumphant music, while low, rich tones, magical glances, inebriating tuberose scent and superb, gold-haired beauty wove such a spell as lulled all longing and disquiet into a trance of calm.

They had coffee in the palm-shadowed hall. George's cigar, lighted by white and beautiful hands, was soft and

delicate of flavor, good to linger over and take in long, slow whiffs, with pleasant humor and dreamy content. Arabel loved it. "I never knew a better brand; not the ghost of a headache in a whole box," she said, watching him, his head thrown back in his deep chair, slowly exhaling the intoxicating fragrance with half-closed eyes. "The count used——" she stopped; he opened wide eyes and looked up.

"The count?" he asked.

"I was thinking," she corrected, "of an old friend of the dear colonel's—he liked these cigars."

His face clouded at this reference to the departed saint whose place he now occupied.

"By the way," he said, to change the subject, "Clamboyne is here. Did you know?"

"He often runs down for the week-end, darling. His house is towards Hove. I never cared for Hove. Tetrazzini is singing at the Dome tonight. Shall we look in and hear her?"

"As you will, sweet. Have you let him know you are here?"

"Certainly not. He has taken no notice of our marriage."

"Do you think he got your letter announcing it?"

"No doubt he did. Besides, he must have seen the *Times* announcement. His horrid wife is always setting him against me and trying to extinguish what little natural affection he has for his wronged sister—his poor little Sis." Her voice broke slightly, she steadied it with an effort.

"Thundering shame. Were you brought up together?"

"Not exactly. Dear Mamma insisted on our meeting from time to time, and we were the greatest friends—while she lived. After her death I was utterly neglected. Won't you have another? Lazy boy. Not if I light it for you?"

"Your father had divorced her, I understand?"

"Cruel boy," a deep, long sigh and a look that might

have melted a cross-examining barrister. "You *know* that she was innocent—and—how deeply this subject distresses——" she turned her face away and dried an imaginary tear.

"Forgive me, sweetest. I was a beast to begin again. But you know that I only want to know how to restore you to your proper place and vindicate the honor of your——"

"Hush, oh, hush!" she whispered, looking round, as if to remind him that the people scattered about the hall had ears.

He was silenced but a little puzzled to know how Lady Arabel's birth and inheritance were to be legitimized and substantiated, if all allusion to the circumstances invalidating these was forbidden. And, in spite of the glamour upon him, he was not too blind to see that the late Lord Clamboyne must have had serious doubts as to Lady Arabel being his child, and that one or both of her supposed parents must have been very far from saintly. It was natural that Arabel should have a firmer faith in the mother who clung to her than in the father who cast her off; but it was quite possible, and not at all improbable, that a lady found guilty by a divorce court was not wholly innocent. Perhaps Lord Clamboyne, if he were not the intriguing, perjured villain he was represented to be by his supposed daughter, who would have heard this character of him from her mother, thought it possible that the child was his. But the honeymoon was hardly set and George was still too deeply infatuated to resent having been kept in ignorance of these family matters till the day of the marriage. Nevertheless, the fact was a crumpled roseleaf, quickly turning to a thorn.

Another sharper thorn was the way in which Hugh, so exultant and sympathetic on his accession to office, had received the great and glad news of his marriage. It seemed as if his friends grudged him this personal happiness, coming upon his elevation to office. Jim had openly pitied him.

Marriage alone, Jim said gloomily, could bring men to the lowest deep of misery. Outside that tragic condition, the bitterest drop was always wanting to the cup. It was also a hindrance to a man in public life, unless it secured influential and socially advantageous connections. He had always supposed George to be too deeply devoted to the aims he had at heart to hamper himself with personal cares and anxieties. It was like Jim to say these disconcerting things; his little flashes of worldly wiseness, quite at variance with his character, were well known to his friends.

After Christmas and a brief flight to the south of France, a house in the neighborhood of Westminster was taken, and beautifully furnished and decorated under the supervision of a lady artist, whose profession it was to do these things. Then a startling thing happened. Lady Arabel Darrell's name was not accepted at court.

"It is part of the persecution," she explained to the minister, who was unfamiliar with these high affairs. "Clamboyne disowns me, my name is excised from the peerage, my inheritance seized, my dear mother's honor impugned."

Still she took this rebuff very meekly; she even seemed little ruffled to find that her visitors were chiefly males. But it was a heavy and startling blow to George, whose dreams of social influence were shattered once and for all by it. He said nothing, however, and resigned himself to the hard logic of fact.

Lord Clamboyne in the meantime seemed to be entirely unconscious of his relationship to Lady Arabel Darrell, of whom he had only heard vaguely as George Darrell's wife.

"What is this about Darrell's wife?" he asked Lord Amberwood one day in a chance meeting. "You know all his antecedents, I think?"

"But not his wife's. He has probably been caught by some adventuress. I hear that she gives herself out as the

disowned daughter of an English peer, who divorced her mother."

Lord Clamboyne looked thoughtfully at a small object on the table before him. "And Darrell is privy to this?" he asked.

"The victim. The man is honest as the day. Simple as a child in these matters and as ignorant. He talks about righting her wrongs, going to law and all that."

"Ah!—h'm. Does she name this supposed father?" he asked, knowing that everybody knew that the last Earl Clamboyne had divorced his wife.

"Not that I have heard. Darrell is just the sort of great-hearted chap to be caught in the toils of a Delilah. Pity. The marriage will drag him down. Handsome woman, too, very handsome."

"And not unlike Clamboyne," he confided later to Mrs. Ashberry. "Lady Clamboyne was a too well-known personage in the *chronique scandaleuse* of her day. By the way, Hugh thinks that Lady Arabel may honestly believe in her mother, who died years ago."

"My dear Amberwood, has Hugh *seen* the woman? She is one solid fake—mind and body."

"Well, a little made-up, perhaps, and her manner rather —continental. She had a foreign upbringing, it appears, and that accounts for so much. She is clever and interesting and capable. She knows her way about the world, particularly the world of European politics. There is a curious power about her. She is ambitious, of course, and audacious. She is playing a deep game and may hold trumps, for all we know. Hugh is no fool, Margaret; but he's a man, and men are not as critical of fascinating women as their sisters are. He thinks she would have passed muster and might have been a success, but for the mistake of the courtesy title, which she may yet prove to be her right. She can talk, and there

are still a few old fogeys, like ourselves, who can tolerate conversation. The Fitzhenrys of the last generation talked well. They were a rackety set. Clamboyne was at one time very wild; he sobered down later. He had that curious enigmatic smile, too."

"Oh, my dear Amberwood! A horrid, sly look, you mean. I remember meeting him somewhere."

Lord Amberwood smiled indulgently at the hard judgments of good and charming women; Margaret sighed and mused forgivingly upon the frailty of the best of men.

"It is my belief," she confided later to Sylvia, "that the woman had the audacity to cast her toils upon poor old Amberwood himself. He is far too good to be able to see through creatures of her sort."

"She would naturally try to please a man to whom her husband owes so much," Sylvia said; "let us hope you are mistaken in her, Madge dear—I am thankful that my illness removes all possibility of my calling on her, though," she murmured in a low, tired voice.

"Our boy and that woman!" said Margaret resentfully; "he's much too great a personage for us now, Sylvia. He doesn't even know of your illness, wouldn't care perhaps if he did. Those Elysian Sunday afternoons!—forgotten long ago. We were his ladder. No thought of the ladder now. Not too grateful. I thought better of him than that."

"We are not forgotten, Madge dear, only overlaid a little in the rush of so many things," she replied with the gentle smile that went to her friends' hearts. "Marriage is an exacting thing; even more exacting, perhaps, than sudden rise to office."

CHAPTER IV

THE autumn session was turbulent, political strife bitter, labor troubles threatening to dislocate the whole scheme of national life. The new minister rose early, and late, if at all, took rest, and enjoyed but a week's continental holiday in the short recess before Parliament resumed in the spring for a longer and more turbulent sitting. The glamour of pre-nuptial and honeymoon days was past; but there remained in the bride something new and very serviceable to a man of manifold and strenuous activities. She gave George the repose and security of a refined and luxurious home, where every exertion necessary to civilized physical existence was reduced to a minimum, all responsibility and care for the machinery of living limited to signing checks and the warm welcome and undoubted love of a beautiful and fascinating woman awaited him. The very fact that Arabel professed to have no sympathy with his aims, and no real interest in the great national struggle in which the country was engaged, told for repose. The Prime Minister and the rest of His Majesty's servants were to her but counters in the great game, of which her George was another; she wanted his side to win for his sake, but cared not how—so she said. Her interest in European politics took no count of the smaller world of party affairs. She took no interest in literature, was blind to natural beauty and valued works of art for what they would fetch in the market. Music was to her but an agreeable noise, more or less conducive to gayety; she liked very light opera, tolerated grand and put up with both as an excuse for being in a theater in full

dress. Yet she had a good mezzo voice, sang with technical excellence and was a brilliant pianist, though showy and superficial. She had no religion but professed a mawkish and sentimental religiosity that never interfered with her own comfort or pleasure; she was not even an honest pagan. Beyond desire for physical enjoyment and worldly advancement, she had nothing in common with George. They could never exchange a thought or a sentiment, though she could talk divertingly in a persiflage spiced with an approach to wit and much shrewd observation. But she made him comfortable and freed him from petty cares.

It was a great boon at this time of stress and preoccupation to go to a home where he might do exactly as he pleased, consider no convenience but his own, keep no hours, speak or be silent, take a book or sleep in a deep chair after dinner or at any hour that suited him, be surrounded by little tender cares and always find perfectly cooked, well-appointed meals, and a smiling face, set off by beautiful dress. Sometimes Arabel read him to sleep, or amused him while half-dozing, with light fiction, chiefly French, gliding easily over passages too frank and unclothed, and cleverly slurring parts to which he was already dulled by unfamiliarity with the language and an untainted imagination. Or she would sing ballads of sentiment, florid *bravura* bits from comic opera and operetta, gay little French songs, dismal music-hall gems, dialect songs in various tongues, some of them too powerful even for the ears of Louise, who was often moved to side-splitting mirth by George's absolute imperviousness to the meaning of these cheerful little ditties. So after the first pangs of disappointment at his wife's total want of response to his spiritual and mental needs, he found consolation in the narcotic of material pleasure and mental stagnation she supplied. He was too busy to wonder why she had so fascinated him, or to reflect that he had never really

loved her, but he had occasional sharp spasms of longing for some such exchange of thought and sympathy as he had so long enjoyed with Sylvia. He recognized the debt he owed to Arabel, and was further drawn to her by the pity with which her wrongs inspired him.

But beyond the feverish exultation at having so early and easily reached Cabinet rank, his elevation brought him little but care and outward dissension and the pain of inward strife. What was one voice among so many in the secrecy of the august consistory of petty kings at Westminster? The harassed Waytansey had gained his point of keeping the industrial party better in hand by putting one of their members in an office specially occupied with their affairs; but on the other hand he had warmed a viper in his bosom, a creature that was perpetually sitting on its tail and hissing poisonous objections and scruples in the sacred seclusion of the consistory, a thing that he could not yet afford to scotch or kill or cast out from his hearth. But the arch-king must and did make his power felt, and the youngest of the temporary sovereigns passed his time in reluctantly helping to forward measures and seeming to acquiesce in practices that were not only repugnant to him but clean against his conscience and, worst of all, his judgment. Compromise, one constantly hears, is the foundation and keystone of political life; it is a virtue of peculiarly British excellence; the one ennobling quality that makes us the superior and unique people we naturally are. Give and take of your most sacred principles and other men's vices, cleave to right government if you will, but concede to others the divine right to rule as badly as they please. Black may be pitchiest black to you, but there are those to whom it is whiter than driven snow, therefore courtesy and prudence alike demand that ink and snow should be called gray. This great empire, remember, enjoys the supreme blessing of party

government. Therefore be loyal to your party *per fas et nefas,* and bow down with it in its most zealous service to the Great Anarch; never dare call that miserable little rag of a soul of yours your own. Besides, party men have no souls, but have only party exigencies. The first duty of a party man is to place or keep his party in power; on that foundation rests the whole of the law and the prophets of party. Within the sacred circle of the Cabinet the voices of the kinglings must seem to be one and tuned to the key of the Arch-king, who in his turn may be but the mouthpiece of some hidden inexorable tyranny, as was strongly suspected to be the case of the unfortunate Waytansey; he, besides having the fear of the great blind god Demos always before his eyes, was commonly reported to have made some Faustian compact with the Great Anarch himself or at least a Mephistophelian representative of that grim power. Voices of protest might be raised in the country, but the dreadful alternative always presented itself in the end—bow or depart. So he bowed, justifying the course as necessary to the just prosecution of his aim. His case was all the more bitter from the double duty imposed on him to serve two masters, Liberal and Labor. Another bitterness was to be held responsible for ministerial actions of which he had never so much as heard.

It was pain and uneasiness and perpetual strife within, pain that none could share, uneasiness and strife never to be divulged, only felt the more bitterly in the deepening solitude of an atrophying soul. A hint of this to Arabel once revealed her on the enemy's side, evoking from her nothing but indulgent laughter and tender contempt, with a little burst of that worldly wisdom his better nature was at war with. He only looked at her in a dumb misery, that she exerted all her power to charm away, and yielding to her hypnotism, took refuge in apathy. He found, too, that it is easier to have

convictions than to act upon them; because convictions come by nature, but acting upon them by the grace of God, which at this time was withdrawn from George Darrell's heart.

The worst pain was when Hugh Mascott, now on the front Opposition bench, spoke against him, voicing his own secret convictions, that it was his own miserable destiny to combat and destroy, a sort of moral filiscide, the remorse for which not all the comfort of the land of Cockaigne he now inhabited could stifle, nor the weakening moral fiber, of which he was fitfully conscious, dull.

"You didn't believe what you said last night," Hugh told him one day with such quiet and startling directness that assent was surprised from him with some disjointed references to party loyalty, and bitter condemnation of the whole system.

But no, Hugh maintained, loyalty was not slavery, nor discipline despotism; where honor or conscience was touched these must yield.

"Bend or depart," George said gloomily.

"Depart then in peace, *anima beata,*" Hugh returned cheerfully.

"And be forgotten and rust for ever in disuse; that's what it comes to," he retorted, musing upon various glorious examples of compromise, particularly that of the Great Betrayal, when lords both spiritual and temporal gave way in pious concession and misplaced confidence to their own undoing and consented to the virtual extinction of one of the three estates of the realm.

In spite of that weakening of moral fiber and apathetic lowering of moral standards, in spite of the invincible and unconscious hold of personal ambition, in spite of the hypnotic influence deliberately exercised upon him by this capable and strong-willed woman, who loved him with an indulging, unnerving love, that ministered to his lower nature, fostered

his weaknesses and stifled his nobler aspirations, a love through which more women, especially well-meaning, self-forgetting women, ruin husbands, than men ruin wives—in spite of all this George began to have grave fears for the whole country and especially for that loved and petted class he was sworn to uphold and care for. He saw a wild and reckless legislation, ostensibly in the interests of that class, gradually mining the foundations of its wellbeing; he saw its ancient virtues deteriorating, its prosperity declining in the face of temporarily inflated wages; he saw it set apart as having separate interests in no way bound with those of the general community, its organizations placed above the law of the land, its rights exaggerated and pressed upon it, its duties ignored and concealed from it; he saw it almost entirely exempted from the burdens and duties of citizenship, yet given preponderance in state government; he saw it flattered and befooled by sycophants who dreaded it, scorned its native nobility, dragged it through the dust by the lure of material comfort, and excited its envy of and set it against every other class. And his own hands were not clean of this. For there had been a time when he had honestly thought it well to urge the daily wage-earners, the suffering chosen, to spoil the Egyptian taskmasters, the classes above them, and had hoped to redeem them by material comfort and golden leisure. But by this time he had learned that the hurt was too deep for any such salve and that no class can be enriched by impoverishment of another, because the wealth of one is the wealth of all. He began to suspect that Esau's scorn of his bartered birthright might divide the responsibility for nearly all actual want with Jacob's greed and subtlety. He began to see in the present reckless and aggressive legislation, Jacob's device of ring-straked rods that, while propitiating him with gifts, cheated simple Esau, from whose neck he was still determined to break the yoke, in spite of the partial jade,

Fortune, or Rebecca, and in obedience to blind Fate, or Isaac.

For what desire for the welfare of the laboring classes could legalize tyrannies that lessen their productive power and penalize their skill, or prompt measures to rob and cripple the only religious body able by its organization and centralized endowments to carry its charity of spiritual and temporal ministration to the remotest hamlets scattered in mountain solitudes, as well as to the dwellers in crowded slums?

"Couldn't you have put in a word for us last week, George?" he heard in a familiar voice one day, as he stood waiting for a train, cigar in mouth, and a porter with rugs and bags at hand, in all the luxury of first-class saloon travel; and he turned, his blood rushing to his face, to accept the warm hand-grasp of his early friend, Mr. Hervey, now visibly burdened with years.

"I could never say enough for *you,* sir," he blurted out, after a subdued gasp; "I was an ungrateful, ungracious young cub but I know better now what I owed, and shall always owe, to you. And I know what you were to my grandfather at the last and to the whole parish. But—I'd better not say the 'but.' *Please* let me take your coat and things."

"You must not judge us parsons by me, George. I took my sacred charge far too lightly, dear lad. Perhaps I was too comfortable. Comfort deadens. My dear wife made me so happy; and the children—they all grew up healthy and good, dear souls, in that sweet spot, so full of delightful friends. No; I was slack—slack. But there are saints among us, George, real saints; yes, and martyrs too, believe me."

The minister's eyes softened and grew moist as he listened to his early friend, while the third-class carriage whisked them to their destination and he heard of old pleasant things.

of a boyhood that was already becoming mythic and legendary to Deerham folk.

"I always knew there was stuff in you," the simple-hearted priest told him, "and thought it was stuff to rule with, especially when you took school-master's caning in the right way and put down the other fellows' mutiny, sitting on the playground wall fresh from the caning that day, and showing them the master's point of view and how he had but got his own back from you."

George threw his head back with one of his jolly laughs. "He didn't get more than half back," he said, "if that." Again he saw the sunny, tree-shaded playground, the ring of ruddy brown faces ready to riot for him, the balled fists and sullen brows, and felt the pleasure of curbing his little, turbulent crowd, seeing the fists unclench, the drawn brows clear and the caps go up with a shrill "hooray!" while he himself sprang at a bound from a martyr to be avenged to a hero to be admired and followed. How sweet the old days were in retrospect; the fourteenth-century church, as inspiring in its degree as St. Mark's; the slow quiver of bench and desk under the organ's solemn thunder; himself lifting up heart and voice with the other clean-faced, white-surpliced children; the ordered ritual, kneeling people, hushed listening and reverent response; the memory of many a glorious and uplifting passage of Scripture pealing down the aisles; the carven faces of angel and saint, looking down on them, the molten jewels blazing many-colored in the windows, and all the beautiful, far-away thoughts these things suggested. How pleasant, too, the clean, open-air life, the ways of bird and beast, the slow-growing beauty of leaf and flower and fruit, the furrow silently filling with corn, the sense of seasons coming and going, the rising and setting of moon and star, the frugal, hunger-spiced meal, the deep, sweet sleep! *How* true had he been to the fount of all that was uplifting

in his life, the double inspiration of nature and a religion enhanced by esthetic charm? And what sort of an England would remain, after all the hammering and sawing of the destructive legislation to which he had been a party? Easy to destroy, but who can rebuild the fabric of ages?

"Oh, what a dull boy," the rich mezzo voice said in caressing reproach, when he came home that evening to the pretty riverside villa they had taken for greater freshness and quiet; "how have they worried the life out of my poor king! All-night sittings again, more committees, and heaven knows what." Soft touches, skillfully tender, tactful blandishments soothed him, and with the refined sensuousness surrounding him, charmed away the weariness of thought and labor and let the old hypnotic trance settle heavily back upon him again.

But often in the freshness of waking in early morning's beauty, reaction set in and rebellion against pleasant fetters, and he knew that his strength was ebbing and his will wasting, as the drug-drinker knows; but the better moment passed as the daily increasing craving for the delightful poison asserted itself, and Arabel became more and more to him every hour of every day. Earlier revolt against certain ways of speech and thought, certain habits and tendencies of hers, repugnant to the finer texture of his nature, passed or became dulled by familiarity. Truly he was a lucky man, he told himself every day.

His wife's exclusion from Court kindled his fierce resentment against the shadowy abstraction, Society; it made his marriage narrow, instead of widening the social circle of bachelor days; all his schemes for attracting and coercing people to right social and political views by means of the wealth she was to bring him were frustrated by the discovery of the insubstantial character of her possessions, which appeared to be either wrongfully detained by others or

not yet inherited. His poor Arabel was truly one of the most deeply wronged and unfortunate of women. Until he had leisure to right the wrongs inflicted upon this outraged saint, there could be no social intercourse for either of them.

To this decree, tranquilly accepted at first, Arabel refused more and more to submit. Why, she argued, punish oneself? How much better to carry the war into the enemy's camp and set up a society of one's own, a court within, or in defiance of, a court? She felt strong enough to do this. She made the small functions within her compass very enjoyable, even brilliant; she knew how to discover talent and draw it out and combine social elements harmoniously. Brilliant men, unrisen but rising, circled round her, but they left their wives, when they had any, at home. Newly rich people made padding for the talented impecunious; freshly discovered geniuses, innocent of worldly ways, were impressed; shady people, like faded clothes by lamplight, concealed their shadows in this stage-lighting; adventurers were not fastidious; people with fads neglected no chance of airing them; these, with a decadent residue, gradually sinking from higher planes, filtered through Arabel's artistically decorated rooms, while she contrived that nobody should be dull, many amused and all regaled with exquisite food and choice drink. "One must lay a foundation, darling," she told George; but she found it hard work and confided to Louise that she could not stand it for long.

The day after his meeting with Mr. Hervey, George left the riverside villa for several days' stay in town, and Arabel, who was to remain among the roses and amuse herself on the river, parted with him on the platform with an affection that even he thought a trifle too warm for public use.

"Thet your wife?" asked a fellow-traveler, a long, lean man with high features and the unmistakable American in-

tonation, when George withdrew from the window and settled down to his papers.

"Certainly," he replied, with a look that meant "Confound your impudence," immersing himself in the paper.

"Lucky man!" the American commented, observing him closely with a singular dry smile, unnoticed by the minister, whose features were too well known by caricature not to be familiar even to a stranger. "'Zorzi *mio,* Zorzi,'" he chuckled to himself, "and it used to be Nattie. So that's your wife," he repeated in a slow drawl, rising and collecting his bags and papers, when the train slowed into the next station; "she was mine once."

"What do you mean?" George was startled into asking.

"What I say. She was mine once. I had to divorce her. My name is Nathan P. Errisson," he added, alighting and turning on the platform as he disappeared in the hurrying crowd.

CHAPTER V

GEORGE was furious at this daring and unprovoked insult to his wife; if the train had not been already in motion he would have dashed out, seized the dastardly insulter by the scruff of his neck and made him swallow his words. But, that being impossible, he had time to cool down and reflect that nothing could be worse for the name of his outraged saint than to drag it into publicity. This was doubtless one of the brutalities of party strife. And though a Yankee would be uninterested in English politics, it was possible to imitate the American accent; Belle did it to perfection. What an actress she would have been. "You'd make a fortune a night on the stage," he told her once, to her violent disgust, that he could not understand. Yet a man leaving the compartment as George got in had shouted, "So long, Colonel." But the world contains many colonels and the abnormal supply of those officers left by the Civil War in America is hardly exhausted yet.

The day was too crowded with business to leave a moment for personal thought; and, though the House rose at a reasonable hour, a good part of the night was spent in the office of *Without Prejudice,* leader-writing and proofreading.

He wrote less and less at home now; the mere sight of Belle acted like a charm; it loosened his sinews and made his eyelids droop in comfortable languor. If he had to address a meeting on a specially important subject, he dared not think over and arrange the presentation of his views and deductions within the sphere of her influence. At first she had accompanied him on his political campaigns, notably to Ire-

land and the north of England; but with disastrous effect on his oratory, besides boring her within an inch of her life.

Towards morning he had a couple of hours' sleep, a cold bath, the Briton's panacea for every ill, and a canter in the Park; then the reception of deputations, more or less cantankerous, and official minutiæ; in the afternoon questions to answer in the House and the sudden discovery, in view of a debate that night, that certain notes, references and statistics carefully prepared for this had been left at the villa, under lock and key and accessible only to himself. A lightning motor-car with a dare-devil driver, stimulated by a noble tip and promised payment of fines, a portable dinner, a bottle of Rhine wine and notebooks in the car, and a bee-line dash for the villa was the only course. So the minister, with a secretary, was soon devouring the miles between Downing Street and one of the prettiest reaches of the Thames, imperilling the lives of fowl, children and aged women, provoking the wrath and escaping the vengeance of impotently protesting policemen, upsetting apple-carts, barrows and people on bicycles, and providing mild enjoyment for minister, secretary and chauffeur, with intense delight for street-boys vociferously cheering their mad career.

The car had hardly stopped before George with one bound was at the door of the lighted hall, into which he rushed greeted by a faint distant odor of soup and savory meats mixed with scents of huge bowls of roses prodigally scattered. With unseeing, preoccupied eyes he saw, and stored the sight in the back of his mind, a hat that was clearly not his, accompanied by a light summer overcoat and a walking-stick of vaguely familiar aspect, as he crossed the hall, loudly demanding the mistress of the house of the startled servant who came out to meet him. Before the man could answer, clearing the stairs with three clean bounds and springing along the velvet carpeted corridor still calling for Arabel, he

reached his bed-room door, which, to his surprise, was locked and refused to yield to his vigorous shaking, though, as no one replied to his summons, it was evident that it must be empty.

"Were you looking for her ladyship, sir?" asked a gentle voice behind him, and he turned to see Louise coming slowly from the opposite direction, demure as a cat and respectful as a bishop's butler. "I think she must be gone down; she was ready some time back."

"Run and tell her I'm in a deuce of a hurry, only come to fetch something left behind," he said, and she flew in advance of his own rapid movement towards Arabel's morning-room, into which his dressing-room opened on one side, making a passage between that and the locked bedroom, with such zealous obedience, that she caught her foot in something and clutching at a stand of flowers to save herself, brought that with a crash heaped upon her prostrate form, which lay right across the passage in George's path, uttering one low moan followed by silence and immovability.

"Confound that girl!—as if she couldn't have done it behind me instead of before," he muttered, restraining the impulse to step over her, and kneeling to ascertain the damage, with the result that she was found to be very much alive, after some seconds of questioning and touching that culminated in a pretty vigorous shake, which brought sparks of fury from the prostrate maiden's suddenly opened eyes and her prompt return to the perpendicular.

"And her la'ship so set on those tiger-lilies, and the bowls too," she moaned, affirming plaintively that her own injuries were not serious.

George dashed on to the morning-room door; that, too, was locked. That room, in which, though a sitting-room, Arabel frequently practiced rites sacred to the Graces, was a holy place to which even he was not always admitted; it

was one of Arabel's virtues, much appreciated by her husband, to conceal the mysteries of the toilet even from his gaze, so the locked door was not surprising, but proved that somebody must be inside, since it was locked from within. Yet it was some seconds before any response came to his impatient knocking, shaking and calling, though he thought that he heard sounds of quick movements within.

He was beginning to be a little anxious—she might be ill—when he caught a glimpse on the stairs of Louise, slowly returning from an unsuccessful quest of her mistress, and was greatly relieved to hear Arabel's own voice sharply reproving the maid's supposed importunity. "Such a noise, Louise, it is really insufferable!" with the quick click of the key in the lock and the change to the glad cry, "*Zorzi mio!* you? who would have thought it, and I so fast asleep. Darling, darling."

He was a little impatient of the delaying caress. "I've left some notes in the dressing-room and motored down for them and must be back on my legs in the House by half-past nine," he explained hastily, going to the dressing-room where another door stopped him, but only a second, as the key was in the lock.

"Oh, those lights," cried Arabel, as sudden darkness involved both rooms; "electric light is really a mistake."

George quickly struck a match and went straight to the locked drawer inside the wardrobe, where he remembered having hastily thrown the papers. "No wonder you go to sleep in your chair, sweet, if you smoke such cigarettes," he was murmuring. "Hullo!"

Crash went something outside an open window, with a sound of scraped metal and a rustle of torn leafage. He went to look out in the thin darkness; the light in the room had suddenly recovered itself with a spring, and made the outside shadows deeper, yet not so deep but that he could see

the creeper that climbed up over a water-spout hidden by it, torn away and hanging in a heaped mass over a flower-bed below.

"Another tiresome cat. You frightened it and it fell clutching the clematis," said Arabel, coming slowly to his side and looking down, saying something in a foreign tongue, a quotation from an Italian poet, George was told, which curiously enough was answered by the cry of an owl. "There, that wretched cat has got the poor thing," she exclaimed; but George, with a hurried good-by caress, was off with his notes down the broad staircase and out into the car, careless alike of cats, owls and nightingales.

"I say, somebody's been burgling the place," said the secretary, running up across the lawn from the direction of the river that flowed at the bottom bordered by trees, dimly visible in the thin shadow; "something came clattering down the side of the house there by that lighted window—'twas dark then—bringing the creeper down, and scuttled off into the shrubs yonder."

"'Twas a man," the chauffeur put in. "I dived after him. He headed for the river, dodged among the trees, jumped into a boat lying there and put off, sculling up river under the trees."

At this George was back in the house in a trice, telling Arabel and giving orders for the men on the place to keep a good lookout, "and tell the police at once," he said in conclusion. "And above all don't be frightened, darling. I came in the nick of time."

Then he was back in the car and buzzing with even madder speed back to town, forgetful of burglars, absorbed in his notes and indifferent to the bumping of the flying car, that leaped up and down hill, over untarred and rutted roads, shaving and literally cutting the turf of hedge-corners, its head-lamps glaring like wicked eyes and casting inverted

pyramids of light upon hedge and wall and road, and escaping disaster by a succession of miracles; while Arabel, extended in a deep chair in the morning-room, with a gold cigar-case, which by crest and initial was obviously not hers, in her hand, was chuckling softly to herself.

"A near thing, a very near thing," she murmured. "Poor dear Zorzi. Bless his innocent heart! In such a deuce of a hurry he didn't even notice that I'd got on the gown he hates, the forbidden *decolletée*. Who would ever have thought of his coming plump upon us like this?"

"In the very nick of time!" shouted Louise, who was doubled up with laughter. "And above all," she screamed, "'Don't be frightened, darling! *Don't* be frightened, darling.' What a bang I fetched myself with those fool flowers; I'm black and blue all over. But above all, 'Don't be frightened, *darling!*'"

"I wonder," Lady Arabel said thoughtfully, when the handmaid recovered a little from her ecstasy, "I wonder if he really is as simple as he seems? Odd, this violent haste for mislaid papers—which, by the way, nobody ever saw. And did that burglar really get off? The burglar! Zorzi's a clumsy actor; but he *can* act. And men *are so double*," she said, with slow, meditative emphasis. "Nat may have got at him, the brute. Flying down and back again in a motor in the middle of a debate. Too thin. But—Zorzi—he isn't like the rest, the darling. Oh, I'm a fool for him, Lou, an utter fool!" She rose, with a sudden change of voice, and raising her beautiful face gazed above the handmaid's head into vacancy. "He's worth them all, my own Zorzi, mine, only mine. There's no beast in Zorzi. But he's a man. I could almost turn good for him."

"I believe you're in love with him," Louise observed with good-natured contempt.

"I am, I am," she said, walking slowly to and fro, her

rich silks rustling, the jewels on her splendidly molded arms and neck glittering, and her eyes burning with unusual light. "That's the worst of it. And yet——"

"Well, don't play the kid, if you can help it, my girl, that's all," the maid rejoined with placid candor. "We all come to it. But you are old enough to know better."

George, drinking delight of battle in the hot and unusually crowded house, had forgotten all about the incident at the villa, but he did not forget, he never forgot, though perhaps it was more a matter of deep-rooted habit than of memory, to look up at the Ladies' Gallery—where Sylvia might be even now—in moments of special interest, and to wonder if she were there listening in the old way with all her heart. Where had she been all this time? Once, only once, since his marriage, he had seen her face, pale and strangely changed—he could not say how, but changed—among innumerable faces in a distant row at a great political meeting, and the sight had unnerved him, producing such agitation that he had recourse to the glass of water provided for the speakers, and, for once losing the thread of his argument, groped about darkly before he could catch it again. After *The Ideal Statesman,* which was printed separately and quoted here and there, Sylvia had sent nothing more to *Without Prejudice* and he had asked for nothing. He had informed her of his marriage in a brief note, that filled her with amazement, mixed with pity and shame. It was, he said quite frankly, a marriage of convenience, contracted for the good of the Cause, which it would put him in a position to advance. Those who aimed high and aspired to play a great part in great movements must put away personal considerations and make even marriage a step to the end to which their lives were dedicated.

She burned it, with a blush for the man she had loved and honored, and another blush for the blindness that had

allowed her so to wreck her happiness and crush her pride. But he had really loved her; she knew that she had not been mistaken in that; and he had loved her with all that was best in him. Nothing could destroy the knowledge of that or eradicate the memory of the sweet May morning in the Park when he gave her the lilies and turned all her life to vital gladness. Yet—to make this venal marriage in cold blood. Yes; the only course was to turn down and seal the page and try to be as if all that passion and beauty and joy had never been. The first step was to write a conventional reply to the announcement with the usual congratulations. This reached him at the close of the honeymoon; it was like a sharp slap in the face and gave him a wild, homesick yearning and a tremulous agitation impossible to describe. That letter too was burned; Lady Arabel never saw or heard of it.

So they vanished each from the life of the other, and though hearsay knowledge of him still reached Sylvia and added something like contempt for him to the shame and pain destroying her, he had not even that. Her name was now never seen in conjunction with Margaret's or Jim's in their numerous philanthropic schemes; her face, except that once, had never been among those in any semipublic or public function. Mrs. Ashberry had taken another secretary, as far as he could make out. He was glad that it should be so, yet always strangely disappointed not to find her face anywhere. More than once he had shaped his lips to ask Jim or Hugh or some quite indifferent person about her; but the agitation roused even by that slight effort had always checked and silenced him.

But in the excitement and glow following that night's battle in the House, where he had been seized upon by Jim, who had been among the crowd of listening peers, and carried off almost by violence to the house in Piccadilly, where invit-

ing cold dishes and wines and one drowsy servant awaited them in the silence of a sleeping household, he found courage, under pretext of the barest civility, to pronounce the name that he feared, during a brief lull in an outpouring of impersonal enthusiasm. Then he heard in reply to his question that Miss Mostyn was convalescent.

"What? You hadn't heard?" cried Jim, much surprised at his ignorance of her illness. "It was this wretched 'flu.' Going about as she did among all sorts of people, she was bound to get it. And equally, with her enthusiasm and self-forgetfulness, she was bound to make light of it and go on till she dropped. So she caught it pretty sharply. There was a time"—Jim caught his breath at the thought—"when—it seemed a question only of hours. Well! there's nobody like her—it was touch and go—but she pulled round, like the gallant lass she is. It was a black time for my sister and me though; but she pulled round—splendid constitution—and she'll be all right now. Yes, she's convalescing; she'll be all right soon."

"Where?" George asked in a dull voice, staring at a dish of quivering jelly before him and slowly turning a wine-glass by the stem in his hand, and Jim did not observe that his face was gray and stern.

"In the South. She's really quite well," he said in a sharp controversial tone, as if George had insisted upon her incurability; "quite well; but this wretched thing is so weakening and English springs so treacherous. Sunshine's the best tonic."

"Influenza," George said slowly and stupidly, "has been very prevalent of late."

"Then, you see," Jim continued gloomily, "she had already been knocked out of time when the beastly thing took her, as it usually does, they say, at a disadvantage. She was awfully cut up by her father's death. Mostyn wasn't

a bad chap altogether; but he was selfish and exacting, yet she adored him. Women, don't you know, are like that, the very best of them, that is; the more you ask of them the more they give. She devoted herself entirely to him, and when he went—none too soon, we thought, for it was wearing work and there seemed a chance of a happier and more natural life for her—she collapsed, was absolutely bowled over, couldn't lift up her head, it seemed, though she never complained, but went on with all her occupations, till this fiendish influenza caught her and all but carried her off. How could you expect her to get strong in a moment, after all that?" he asked angrily, as if George had complained of the delay; "it takes time to get over these things. But she's well, quite well and getting stronger every day. Somehow," he added, after a gloomy pause, "it's always the best that are taken. But she's well, quite well, quite recovered," he corrected hastily, all his words arrows in George's heart.

"Hers was no ordinary talent," he went on. "It was she who really made the Rag——"

"And me too, incidentally," George thought, echoing what politeness urged Jim to leave unspoken.

"She saw just what was wanted to sell the thing. Such a style, so pure, so graceful, so lucid. How you must miss her in *Without Prejudice.*"

"Yes, we miss her," he said, "we miss her," and left the silent house and went home through the quieted streets with such sad thoughts as put the burglar and the American colonel still further out of mind and obliterated all remembrance of the skillful presentation, the impassioned pleading and brilliant argument of two hours ago that men were busily putting through dozens of printing-presses during these still night hours; thoughts that even chased away the haunting nightmare consciousness that it was rapidly becoming the

question not so much of his leaving the Labor party as of the party washing its hands of him.

"He was in great force last night. Quite his old self again," Lord Amberwood said next morning. "Have you noticed the declension since he married and took office, Evelyn? Perhaps he sees his mistake in refusing the Labor leadership and, as the *Daily Insulter* said yesterday, finds that he can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. With his genius! Though, of course, one always finds the peasant strain in him."

"Well, Nelson had his Emma."

"Emma? She was a personage—a genius in her way. Poor Emma, she preyed on no one. There was more dove than hawk in her. Besides, Nelson didn't marry her. Marriage is not like any other relationship, Evelyn. It is so binding; it goes so deep."

"Then there was Samson and Hercules and King David, Paris and Mark Antony, oh! and a lot more—fine fellows in their way——"

"Heaven grant this Delilah is not betraying our Samson to the Philistines, as is whispered about!"

"What *do* you mean, Gerald?"

"Never mind, my dear; it's only whispered and mayn't be true."

But all George thought of when he left Jim that night was that Sylvia was dying and it was his fault.

BOOK VI

THE HARVEST

Watchman, what of the night?
  —The skies are clear;
In yon wood veiled from sight
  The foe draws near.—

No, no; the holy night
  Is calm and clear;
Some phantom misty white
  Awakes thy fear.

Watchman, what of the night?
  —Adown the hill
Armed feet the rockpath smite,
  Else all is still.—

No, no; through silent night
  There breathes a sigh;
'Tis but the rustle light
  Of leaves borne by.

Watchman, what of the night?
  —The stars grow dim;
Steel blades in order bright
  The forest rim.—

Watchman, thou'rt dazed with fright!
  —In dawn-light clear
They burst upon the sight,
  The foe is here!

From *Songs without Singers*, 1913.

CHAPTER I

SYLVIA MOSTYN, thin and shadowy, with a pale face and eyes heavy with fatigue, was basking in the full, steady glow of Italian spring sun, lulled by the clear sweet air that was as still as if under enchantment, yet alive and fresh and scented with the blossom of lemon orchards, the dark leaves of which shone in the sunlight, and threw up the delicate hue of the yellow ovals hanging among them. Surely that peacock-breasted sea was of a deeper and more incredible blue than ever, the pine trees of a more glowing green, the misty olive foliage fuller of rosy gleams and bluish tints; one could see the vineyards putting out their silvery, gray-green sprays and the rose-fence bordering the garden terrace breaking in masses of red and pink and yellow.

She had been brought there, when the vineyards were still purple and crimson with lessening leaves and the warm, calm days short, brought there to die in a painless peace, amid the beauty of those blue-shadowed mountains and violet-veined peaks, caring for nothing earthly but a little rest, yet soothed by the warmth and splendor of color. Margaret and Jim stayed with her for a little, then left her with her maid, and at one time with Verena, and another with Gladys, both of whom escaped, nearly crushed to death by boredom, at the earliest decent moment. Her Deerham Place friends were at hand in Mentone part of the time, and climbed often to her mountain nest to be welcomed with quiet affection and parted from without regret. Sometimes she was taken down to the sea and wheeled among the winter pleasure-crowds,

but always returned with satisfaction to the mountain-ridge. Again sometimes they whisked her through lovely gorges to walled hill-villages, or along narrow ledges of headlands running out to sea, to bring new beauty and fresh scenes to stimulate her waning vitality. Then they tried the magic gardens and motley pleasure-seekers of Monte Carlo, or took her over the frontier to quiet Italian towns on the coast; but the only thing she cared for was to be still in the sun, so at last they let her be. The winter went by like a fireside dream and she was still there, neither sad, sullen nor despairing, but tired, all the life crushed out of her and nothing and no one left on earth to live for. She was not ill now; the beginnings of disease had been arrested; she could stand and move and even take little strolls along the wooded ridge. There, among aromatic shrubs under pine and carob, between gray twisted columns of olives, over flower-braided grass, by slopes sheeted with pink and white cistus, she liked to meet and talk with the laboring folk she loved, and had learned to love in that pleasant spot long ago.

The man and woman with the water-barrels were still there, browner now and their hair touched with gray; the woman a little bent but bright-eyed and hale. The water-barrels were neither more nor less heavy, the pink-washed cottage was pleasant to see as ever with its pergola in front and peach tree, like a huge rose, full of bloom at the side. She had been inside, where there appeared to be nothing but a few pots and barrels, a cat, a goat, some strings of onions and cobs of yellow maize; yet nothing seemed to be lacking, not even the hospitality of wine, rough enough to bring tears to the eyes. Little gifts, never money, found their way to the cottage, a cake, a joint of fresh meat, coffee, colored handkerchiefs, stuff for a gown. Flowers and a little honey were given in return, with endless compassion for

Madame's illness, and prescriptions of an astonishing nature to cure her.

And now in the vivid luster and abundant life of spring, something seemed to stir and trouble her, a wild want for nothing definite, an overpowering ache of longing. The sun beat fiercely down at noon, the winter's friend was becoming a foe; what would it be in full summer? All those tunnels wound about with bare, snaky vine-stems on the terraces would be masses of thick leafage and the scent of blossomed vines like magic in the air; one could almost see the grapes swelling and purpling on those sprouting stems; what hope, what promise was unfolding in them?

> "Das Blühen! will nicht enden;
> Num muss sich alles, alles wenden;"

that was the true spring magic.

A great heart-throb, the possibility of some dim, far-off joy unfolding with the bursting buds and maturing with the fruit latent in the springing sap, broke the quiet of the waking dream; all this renewal of life was infectious; things stirred in the spirit with the stir of earth's life blood. That old hope of doing something to still that "deep sighing of the poor," so bound up with George, so mingled with years of intimate intercourse with him, as its chief exponent and champion, so crushed by the startling blow of his bad faith and duplicity, not only with regard to their personal relations, but also with respect to his own convictions and pledged political faith; that old hope, first kindled in the talk with Hugh and Jim on the ridge years ago, fluttered into tremulous life again, steadied a little by recent knowledge of the people who carried the water-barrels. Poverty with the bearing of material burdens was neither intolerable nor incompatible with the best happiness life has to give, but it was hard. There must always be poverty; the richer the

country the greater the poverty in the mass, if not in proportion. Because industrialism is the only resource for the teeming populations peace and prosperity bring, unless these are kept down by war, famine or pestilence—industrialism, that makes it both necessary and possible to draw food from the ends of the earth, so that civilized and long prosperous nations become capitalists for thinly-peopled and scantily-tilled lands that are to the old countries what fields and farms are to populous cities. And our machine-driven industrialism, which is based upon the last results of age-long science and invention, in other words, on the accumulated labor of centuries of thinkers and students, depends upon a vast variety of incalculable and variable influences and can never insure regular employment for the muscle-workers, as agriculture and kindred food-producing industries can; nor has anyone yet found a remedy for this irregularity of employment, the cause of the most abject misery of civilized countries. Only a stationary population could exist without riches, *i.e.,* of capital. "Every rood of ground" might in that case, providing the rood happened to be good soil, "maintain its man," but nothing more; there could be no civilization, no art, science or literature without some centuries of accumulated wealth and the leisure it brings.

There may be riches and there *must* be poverty; but there need not be so much of either. And to try to lessen this excess might still be an aim worth living for. But no longer with George, who was lost to the cause, sold to place and power. Yet even George, poor, splendid George, blind, intoxicated, groping in darkness, might yet return to honor and duty. And the cause was always there, and many thousands remained who had not bowed the knee to any Baal. "And who could tell through what perplexity of change and doubt even George might be honestly finding his way, or at least seeking it?" she thought today, in the half-anguished,

half-joyous thrill of the spring renewal, that made all things seem possible.

The colony of the Brotherhood of the Golden Rule was ten years old; it seemed to have done nothing; yet Bassett, returned to England for a few months and acknowledging this with a smile, was quite undismayed. "We may be wrong," he said; "or the seed buried in the dark may be slowly germinating. But let us go on till we find something better."

Christianity carried into commerce and all human effort was the Brotherhood's principle. Bassett was still sure of that, the only doubt was in the manner of the application.

A sheaf of manuscript gathered from Sylvia's writing-table and locked away by Margaret when she was taken ill, that had come to light in some recent feeble attempts at exertion, lay on her lap. With a sigh of weariness she turned them over, reading here and there and pausing over this, written, she saw by the date, after one of the repeated, unheeded, bemocked appeals for national defense from the nation's greatest and most experienced soldier.

THE SLEEPER

Oh! that my words were fire,
That my voice was a trumpet peal,
For the land of my heart's desire
For England's honor and weal;

To rouse her from sloth and dream,
To pierce to her deadened soul,
To show in a lightning gleam
The tempests that round her roll,

While her sons lie lapped in content,
Soft lovers of games and gold,
Their thoughts from all hard things bent,
Their spirits to honor cold!

To stab her with sudden light,
  To bring to her terrible eyes
The old, fierce flash at the sight
  Of the shame that upon her lies,

To burst at one mighty stroke
  The shackles of anarchy;
To break the demagogue's yoke
  From her neck and to set her free,

With her bold strong brow unshamed,
  And her glorious limbs unbound,
To show her, unsullied, untamed,
  With her age-won liberty crowned;

On her ermine never a stain,
  On her statesmen never a soil,
With honor to gild her reign,
  And plenty to bless her toil!

Arise, great Mother, arise,
  Lest thou fall, as of old Rome fell,
Dash the haze from thy sleep-dimmed eyes,
  Heed the clang of the tocsin bell!

Thy brow should be bound with steel,
  O Britain, and not with rose,
Thy bosom aflame with zeal
  For action and not repose.

Break the spell of thy terrible trance,
  Thy brain from the sleep-bonds free,
And behold with unshrinking glance
  Thy duty, thy destiny!

She had thought that, had felt that most burningly, who could care for nothing now. She must rouse herself from this dull, consuming lethargy.

Sudden longing for the tender beauty and shy dalliance of English April, for lavender skies and opal cloud-masses, fluting blackbirds, sparkling showers, gray-ridged seas, and green-jeweled beech boughs, for sharp scuds of rain and hail,

flush of delicate green on sunlit woods, seized her. This richly-colored warmth and beauty had done its healing; it was time to go home. But home held nothing for her now.

The day wore on in cloudless beauty, languor stabbed with unrest stole upon her; she wandered through the pines and climbed the ridge, where the convent rose among its guardian cypresses, a mark and a token for many miles round, and paced slowly to and fro in the sweet, still air, till faintness drove her to the two tall eucalyptus, that ranged high above all on the seaward-fronting steps. There she sat in the crooked limb of a tree, her head against the red trunk, her eyes closed to the wide loveliness outspread before her. Life was too lonely.

The plain wooden cross Lady Amberwood remembered posted between the trees at the top of the steps, for welcome and consolation to all who approached, with *Spes unica* on its outspread arms, was no longer there, nor had been for years. The only hope had almost vanished from France, to return perhaps one day on blood-crested seas of revolution, famine, or war; that hope, though now darkened, could never die; one might live for that.

If only George had not written her that dreadful letter a few days since, declaring that he had never ceased to love her and never could, that she was amply avenged, that he could not live without her. Written in a mad moment, repented and half-forgotten, probably, but written. He had those ungovernable impulses. Strange that she had once loved George; the remembrance made her hot with shame. His desertion and broken faith were bearable, but not his degrading marriage with that woman. Who was not weak at times? She feared herself; she would go away over all the world, visit every center of industry, study agricultural and pastoral peoples and try to get to the canker at the root of the world's wealth and power. One had to live.

People came and went, troubling the solemn stillness of the cypress aisle with snatches of unmeaning talk and vacant laughter. She had come and gone there in the glorious afterglow of a day long ago. She thought of that day's despair and Hugh's support and sympathy; that had never failed her and never would. The very sea, beginning to take on the dyes of sunset, seemed to brighten at those memories. An approaching step paused at her side, her name in a familiar voice made her start and turn to look, with a subdued glad cry of "Hugh," into the good face of her loyal and loving friend and true knight; and springing up she took his offered hands, a wave of happiness rushing redly over her face and leaving it whiter than before.

"But is it really you? Where did you come from? How did you get here? Why, your speech only came today in the *Times*. Did you come in the mail-bags with it? Dear Hugh, how delightful and how impossible!"

"I heard," he replied presently in a husky voice, still holding her hands, "that you were ill, very ill again—and I couldn't bear it——"

"Ill? What nonsense!"

"Jim told me. He was terribly cut up. Influenza again, he said, and coming on the great weakness. But, are you really better?—very pale, very thin; still, I scarcely thought to find you up, much less up here. Margaret had heard from you of a cold, Violet had found you in bed and thought badly of it; somebody else, Lisfearne's people, I think, said it was severe influenza and people dying like flies all round. Margaret telegraphed to your doctor, what's his name, and I took the first *train de luxe*——"

"What a pity! All for nothing." She sank back in the tree with the look of exhaustion that had become habitual, staying her head against the eucalyptus trunk, her lips white, her face almost transparent in a fragility that went to his

heart. "I took a sharp cold that was going about and everybody had, and soon got rid of it, that was all. I am indeed exasperatingly well. They must have mixed me up with somebody else. Now I understand why Dr. Simpson called yesterday and was so mysterious. It was Margaret's telegram. It's you that want physicking, Hugh. How did you get those black marks under the eyes? All-night sittings?"

He scarcely heard what she said. He had not seen her for months; her fragility and exhaustion impressed him. It was the way of wasting illnesses to keep the victims gay and hopeful to the last.

"I came," he said, "on the spur of the moment; I came, I am here, to see for myself what this long, dreadful illness, that they say is no illness, means, and how it is to be cured."

"It is no illness, only a sort of tiredness and boredom, a distaste for life. Perhaps it is age. No woman likes to say good-by to youth."

"You cannot forget, Sylvia? Is that it? Try. Oh! my dear, try to live, not for yourself, but try to live, for me. I need you, I do not say I cannot live without you; I can, but only a maimed, inadequate life. Yes, I can live and will. This is no boy-and-girl business, Sylvia; though we were but lad and lass when I spoke first here on this spot so long ago. It has grown into my life, it can only end with that. I ask little, for I know you have already given of your best. It is no wild or fanciful feeling, but a deep and unquenchable necessity. It has waited without hope. Give me hope. With you I am free and content and able to do whatever has to be done, I won't say well, but better; not lamely and inadequately as now. To be with you, to make you happy, or even less unhappy, is the greatest happiness I could have in this world. If you say 'No' a fourth time, I can bear it. I shall go on just as before, as if I had never spoken, and be

your good comrade and friend once more, ready and glad to serve you at need. And some day I might ask you again, but not yet, nor perhaps for years. But don't send me away, dear Sylvia, this fourth time."

His voice was deep and moving, his eyes moist and his face grave and steady, almost commanding in its proud calm and restraint. A great wave of feeling rose and broke over Sylvia, her eyes were opened; she had a sudden sense of the wonder and beauty of this man's enduring love. It was a thing beyond the touch of time or chance; it was founded on the rock of a loyal and noble and lovable nature. So he had stood here years ago, a generous-hearted, impulsive boy, and so spoken, and so again by the wintry sea in the fullness of early manhood. His face now in the cold light that came when the sun's rim dipped and took the color from earth and sea, had the beauty and distinction of great aims steadily followed and the calm of matured power; a few threads of silver in his hair went to her heart. In a moment all within her changed; glamour, like that Venus cast upon Ulysses in the eyes of Nausicaa, clothed him with the gathered brightness and charm of all the years that had gone before. She knew now that he had always been and always would be hers, and that she had always needed his friendship more than anything else on earth.

The eucalyptus leaves rustled drily in the chill of the sun's sinking, the sea darkened, the violet, gold-tipped peaks turned gray, and the convent walls dead white.

"Am I to go this time?" he asked with a little sigh.

She put her hand in his. "As you will. You are more to me than all the world," she said. "But what can I give in return? All my life is laid waste."

"I only want you. And your life must not be laid waste. It is going to revive and blossom with health and sunshine." His face flushed in the warm afterglow that sud-

denly swept up to the zenith from the sunken sun, dyeing cold, gray peaks rose-red, purpling slopes of pine and olives, changing the dark blue sea to glowing crimson, casting a magical luster on ruddy brown roofs and turning every stock and stone and scattered straw to unearthly jewelry. "Everything will come right now, my dear. You will be well and strong and, I hope, happy. The Disruption Bill shall never pass and we may even carry our Housing of the Poor and Small Holdings Act. Dearest, I met the man and woman carrying the water-barrels today, the very same pair." He smiled in fullness of unutterable joy, and a light rustle in the treetops reminded him of their counsel so many years ago—*warte nur.* He had waited.

"If only father could know," Sylvia said later, when all the mountain beauty was steeped in the glamour of moonlight; "he always thought so much of you. He even hinted at this, once. Dear father, always so unselfish, so eager for my happiness!"

CHAPTER II

GEORGE'S wild and alarming outburst in the letter to Sylvia, the character of which she had rightly divined, had been provoked by what in cooler moments he had been brought to consider as the cruel and baseless calumny of the American colonel. That had resulted at first in fiery indignation and something more serious than misunderstanding, soon dissipated by gentle denial and a glance from dark, mysterious eyes full of soft reproach and clear with pained surprise and innocence.

"We poor women," his charming wife explained, "are never allowed to be happy. People are so envious and spiteful; they hunt us down and make us the mark of every base calumny the moment we get a rise in life. Many women in England would give their heads to be in my place, Zorzi *mio*. But they can't; so they make up these vile, stupid stories to spite me."

"But this man, this Errisson, is alive. He claims you as his divorced wife."

"Divorce is so easy in the States, darling. The color of hair—almost any cause is sufficient. He called it bad temper. There was plenty of that on his side, certainly. He knew I had ample grounds and meant to go upon them. So he thought he had better be first in the field."

"Belle! You said he was dead, and that you were a widow."

"Divorce has such a bad name in Europe, dear. And he *was* dead to me. Yes; I was wrong. It was a loving woman's weakness; a white lie, and done for my dear saint.

I knew how the thought of divorce would distress you, *Giorgio mio,* you, with your high moral standard and sensitive feelings of honor. I even feared—ah me! how I feared—it might make me lose you. I was weak—I could not bear that; it would have killed me. Besides, I thought you would never know, *he* would never cross my path again, and why should my dearest love be troubled and tortured for nothing?"

The reasoning was neither powerful nor convincing, but the voice was moving music, and long soft looks from the liquid darkness of deep, strange eyes, caresses, tones that were more than caresses, expressive gestures and that curious magnetism emanating from voice, touch and look that bound him helpless as a child in her hands, prevailed; and the lovers' quarrel resulted in the proverbial renewal of love. George even began to wonder that he had ever been angry in the subsequent drowsy content that fell upon him, stilling every other feeling in a delicious numbness of will and absence of desire for anything but calm. This content had been so strong on that occasion that it had produced actual sleep, during which he was dimly conscious of white hands weaving quick mazes on the air before his eyes, and from which he woke, unrefreshed and heavy, with a conviction that the story of the divorce was a confused, half-forgotten dream, better let go altogether. He had often waked, even before his marriage, from such slumbers in Arabel's presence, exhausted and heavy as if from drink.

The effect of her presence upon him, at this time unusually strong, may have been due to the fascination mixed with repulsion of her half-mocking, half-caressing eyes, or the strong scents she used or the curious witchery of her voice, even in some slight degree to the perfumed cigarettes she smoked. It was always narcotic and always brought his point of view more or less to hers. So great was this

mental and moral sway becoming by this time, that he began to lead a dual life; the Zorzi of domestic hours thought and felt in quite another way from the Right Honorable George Darrell of official and parliamentary life, or the frank and cheery and pleasantly unconventional Darrell of social and intimate moments. He was beginning to be conscious of this; it even gave him a sort of dull satisfaction by assuring an absolute change of atmosphere from that of his heavy and complicated toils. These had the increasing burden of perpetual mental strife as the proceedings of Government became more and more repugnant to him and all attempts to restrain or modify these proceedings convinced him more and more of the futility of resistance. It was clear that his place was no longer in the ministry, but by no means clear where it was. His influence with his own party had so declined that he could never now hope for the once destined Labor leadership that he had recklessly thrown to the winds; he was worried by the perception that His Majesty might any day find that he had no more need of his services. He ought never to have risen to that bait; jumping at the shadow he had lost the substance.

One day in early summer, to his surprise, Jim walked into the office of *Without Prejudice* and expressed strong feelings on recent high-handed Government proceedings. They were not to be supported; they were landing the country in civil war; they were not democratic; they were not acting on the will of the People; they must be denounced.

Jim was no party man; his politics were confused, illogical and capricious; but he was always with all his heart democratic; in his eyes the People could do no wrong; they had a divine right to rule; to be a manual laborer was to be endowed with all the virtues. To this simple creed, in spite of innumerable inconsistencies and all sorts of vagaries, he

adhered, and of this he considered George Darrell to be the main exponent, through the columns of *Without Prejudice,* which he rarely perused, though he occasionally contributed to it brilliant and beautifully written papers, lit with flashes of insight that made people wonder why he should not venture seriously into political life. The real truth, as George soon discovered, was that Jim had no head for affairs, while his conception of social conditions was that whatever they were they were wrong.

Jim, therefore, never interfered in the conduct of the paper, trusting implicitly in George and the subeditors; his appearance on this occasion was the last straw to the unfortunate minister. What if the Government were wrong? George asked; he was in the Government, he could not denounce it; it must be let alone or let down very gently.

To Jim this was blasphemy. Compromise was not to be thought of. The argument was long, complicated and exhausting; but the stronger character prevailed and Jim was made by various subtleties to believe that his own views on the matter were being adopted and were certainly in agreement with those of George, so the attack was never made.

"Then I leave it to your judgment," Jim said with a sigh of relief. "You know how to put these things judiciously and temperately, without unnecessarily alienating sympathy." George winced under the smile of admiring single-hearted trust accompanying the words, and thought it hard that Jim's papers should be used to maintain principles he detested, the paper's title to impartiality being well known as a transparent pretense. He knew that he ought to resign the conduct of *Without Prejudice,* but that would be to surrender the very citadel of power and profit. So he had the hard task of trying to tack between two opposing winds, one of which blew strong from the quarter of honor and principle.

"When are you coming to dine with us?" Jim asked, after the hearty squeeze he inflicted only on his best friends' hands, "or lunch, or anything? Do find a day or hour soon. Come before Miss Mostyn is gone, or at least come and comfort us afterwards. The wedding is to be simple, no fuss, no guests."

"The wedding?" George, furtively shaking the hand crushed by Jim, stepped back suddenly, the blood leaving his face.

"You hadn't heard? I thought Hugh Mascott would have told you; it has to be kept dark, she's still in mourning and only half-recovered from illness. Of course we are delighted. We always knew where Hugh's wishes were. Didn't you?"

Lady Arabel had a telegram that evening to the effect that ministerial business kept her husband in town for the night; and when the day's appointments had been kept in a kind of bad dream, George went to the prettily decorated house in Westminster and deliberately drank himself stupid. The next day all his engagements had to be canceled, but on the third he was himself again and seeing Hugh in his neighborhood carefully avoided him.

"How much had Sylvia told Hugh?" he wondered miserably, and finally told Hugh himself by allusion, as a fact that must naturally be known to him.

"For me," he said in his open-hearted way, "it was a heavenly dream, a feeling no one else could ever inspire. I wonder that I ever dared look up to her. On her part it was pure kindness and the grace of a most beautiful nature, nothing more. I think I always knew that it could never be more than a lovely dream. Well, she has chosen the right man at last, and a lucky chap he is."

But George knew that a black cloud had shadowed the noble friendship that had been, almost more than his love,

the poetry and inspiration of his life, a cloud that came not from his loving Sylvia but from his leaving her. And Hugh knew this, too, with the double pain of Sylvia's sorrow and George's disloyalty. Still the friendship held. And there was that in George's face that told Hugh that Sylvia was already being avenged, as certain rumors hinted she would be more completely before long.

The friendship held, though the two marriages parted the friends socially and political antagonism was growing graver from hour to hour. It was no longer mere party strife that placed the friends in opposing camps; the measure of the hour, to compass which the constitution had been violated, solemn pledges broken and a tyrannous oligarchy substituted for the ancient liberties of self-rule, involved grave imperial interests and imperilled the very existence of the nation. So important was the measure which that sleepy and comfortable section of the "gentlemen of England"—not to mention the cozy shop-keepers and snug artisans—who "sit at home at ease," affected to regard as a mild and satisfactory arrangement, offensive to none except political partisans in the game and less serious than football—so important that armed forces were being openly raised and trained to resist the enforcement of it in the localities directly affected by it. And he saw, and knew that those who denied it saw, at this time, a watchful and powerful enemy waiting his opportunity to spring upon a people blinded by long security and stupefied by luxury, a tiny model army reduced to a minimum of strength in the face of repeated grave warnings—a tiny but perfect army insulted, calumniated and held up to the reprobation of the people. He saw an unthinking proletariat, blinded by flattery and deluded by the *ignis-fatuus* of nineteen shillings for eighteen pence, daily more defiant of law and authority, even of its own leaders. He saw a thunder-cloud on the eastern horizon ready to burst and fire the train of

Europe armed to the teeth, while a parliament wrangled over the most effective way to tear the country asunder, and he knew himself a party to all this, and his sin lay heavy on his soul.

In this inner turmoil and outward stress he abandoned himself more completely to the narcotic on his own hearth, and found consolation in the thought that at least one human being loved him with entire devotion. But he was too preoccupied to observe a cloud of gloom and unrest upon Arabel's gay and careless exterior, or to see that she had recourse more and more to the quickest and easiest ways of amusing him; though he was dimly aware that he slept in his chair of an evening rather more frequently and was more clearly aware that her influence was a thing to be dreaded.

One Sunday, having spent Saturday evening at a political gathering in the North, he came down to the riverside villa, with the old numbness stealing over him at the very sight of the pretty bower of roses, and deepening during the attractive luncheon spread before him in the cool, flower-scented room. Arabel wished to stay in the garden afterwards; but he persuaded her to let him row her up the river to the cool shadow of overhanging woods. There, with the sculls in his hands, his throat bare to breeze and sun, and the muscular effort of quick, skillful oar-strokes speeding the light dinghy over the clear, bright water, he felt more his own master.

"Almost as nice as a gondola; only this is not Venice," he said, smiling into the face of the lady in the stern; "a little to the right, dearest; we nearly fouled those idiots."

"Venice? There were no cockney *canaille* at Venice. Really, George, we might as well be in Whitechapel. With this horrid glare from the water, too. For pity's sake put on a sprint and get us as quick as you can into the shade of those woods you talk about."

"And you don't believe in, Belle? *Wait and see,*" and off shot the dinghy to the grave peril of a ruck of wildly navigated small craft and the dripping heat of the oarsman, for which he was smartly reprimanded, "making such a sight of himself."

The midsummer sun was hot; a smart breeze had sprung up at noon, and between the two Arabel's complexion, the arrangement of her hair, the adjustment of her sunshade and veil, her comfort and her temper were seriously imperilled, also—though she was too cross to observe it—her hypnotic influence upon George. He felt more and more his own man and quite capable of conveying the intelligence he had at first dreaded to impart by the time they had reached the tree-shaded bank, the oars were shipped and the oarsman had turned away to dry his face as privately as circumstances permitted.

"Don't scold me too much, darling," he said presently, admitting that no one but a born idiot would have risked the sunstroke she prophesied by violent exercise in the heat, when he had a shady garden by the river to drowse in; "because I have an awful lot of bothers on me, just now. Oh, yes, I *might* have chosen a cooler form of suicide, no doubt. But in case I should survive, as I venture to hope I may, the solid truth is that I have to set my house in order."

"What on earth do you mean?" she asked, her peevishness vanishing in a fear he was far from divining.

"I mean, dearest," he replied gravely, "and this is why I am obliged to worry you with what I would so much rather keep from you—that I am afraid we must reduce our expenses very considerably."

"Nonsense, Zorzi, you have taken fright over that foolish bill of mine that you so sweetly and angelically paid. You know now, darling, that the woman had me with her excessive charges, that I ought to have provided against. Once

bit, twice shy, and I shall not be taken in again; I am going to look into things *very* carefully now, dearest."

It was not that, he explained, but something more serious. He had not accurately calculated the expenses of the two establishments they were keeping up, did not know how far official income would go, or that other sources of income were diminishing. More than that, the official salary would probably stop before long.

"Stop? What d'you mean?" she flashed out sharply. "Lose office? Waytansey turned out? Not he."

"It is more than probable that the Government may be defeated at the finish, Belle. The Liberals don't half like the Bill, at least in its present form. They are straining to the last point to keep the Government in, yet the majority grows thinner and thinner. We must be prepared for the worst."

"Oh, don't you be frightened," she returned, reassured; "they've swallowed so much, they'll swallow anything to keep in."

"You seem to know all about it," he observed with gentle chaff, amused at dogmatic assertions from one who affected to take no interest in politics and know nothing of events. "But apart from the Government being defeated, they are a good deal divided. There have been changes——"

"Changes within the Cabinet are a sign of vitality," she commented serenely. "At Vienna——"

"Well? At Vienna?"

"I used to hear a good deal in diplomatic sets—and I remember that was one of the ambassadorial sayings—that a little division was a good sign," she hesitated. "They will never be turned out, George," she finished, recovering herself.

"Really? At Vienna? I thought you took no interest in politics." What had she had to do with foreign embassies? But his astonishment soon vanished in graver concerns.

"The point is that Waytansey is not very keen on having me there. I don't give satisfaction, that's very clear. Any day I may find that His Majesty has no longer any need for my services. Also expenses are much heavier than I made allowance for. The long and short of it is, my dear, that one of the establishments must be given up, to begin with. Then we must see what else can be cut down."

He had fired his shot; it took heavy effect and evoked reprisals—remonstrance, argument, both gentle and severe, reproach, pathos, indignation, scorn, blandishment, subtle and strong, even tears; but he stood to his guns and rowed back to the villa in the lengthening shadows, silent but unsubdued; and on arrival discovered with a transparent surprise so unexpected and foreign to his open ways that it took Arabel in, that a special messenger had called him back to town immediately.

Hard on her, he thought; but her wild extravagance had to be checked; half-measures were useless, and for once he held his own against the charm that was growing so strong, and returned to town, lonely and wretched but glad to feel his freedom. One had to sacrifice oneself for duty.

"I'm about fed up with this, Lou," the waiting-maid heard later. "I'm sure he's been got at again. It isn't Nat this time. Something has put up his back and made him get his leg over the traces. When the purse shuts, love is beginning to fade. That's the first sign. He's grizzling over money—but I will say this for Zorzi, he never breathes a syllable of his disappointment in my money. Some woman this time, I expect."

" 'Tisn't a woman—yet," the maid replied thoughtfully. "Of course he's cooling off. You can't always keep them at boiling-point, you silly. Not even such babes as Zorzi. It's Wyvering, I warned you of him at Venice."

"If it was, the game would be up, and it isn't—yet. Oh, by the way, he's always at me to send *you* off, Lou. You're too expensive, my dear."

"Bless him! What does he *know,* I wonder?"

"Oh, I said you were a poor relation—he'd seen a likeness. I think—I'm deadly afraid—Clamboyne is in this, Lou. I think his lordship has set his wits and his lawyers to work and dished us. If I'd only known her death was known."

"Not with his wits, Belle. But is it known?"

"Proved. After all, George got over the divorce," she added more confidently, "and never fretted about the swag. But I'm sick of it all. Besides, I never dreamed of his being chucked by Waytansey. Of course he'll come up smiling again, even if he is chucked. But not yet. And I never was a waiter."

"Weren't you, though? After all, a waitress is better than the chorus," sighed Louise, emitting spirals of smoke from her cigarette.

George's heart smote him more and more for leaving his poor Arabel, lonely and upset by his cruel restrictions on her luxuries. He was lonely himself and the villa was very inviting that hot evening; he knew well how the river reach was gleaming silver in the white moonlight, that must be weaving a magic about the very chimney-pots. After all, her marriage had brought her many disappointments and denials, all bravely and sweetly faced. Luxury was the air she had breathed from her birth, the consideration due to which was so wrongfully denied her. One could deny oneself; material comfort was nothing to him; his denial was his losing her society and the exquisite pleasure of surrounding her with everything she wanted, this one creature who loved him, and warding off every worry and discomfort from that tender and devoted heart.

Sundry jars and revolts of the inborn refinement of a high poetic intelligence—more sensitive apparently than all the blue blood of the Fitzhenrys transmitted through the veins of ever so many belted earls—were forgotten in these moments of compunction and he remembered that in Arabel's sight he was but a clod with the humblest possible breeding. In his ignorance and roughness he must often have shocked that vague quintessence of superiority in which he believed as ardently as only a professor of social equality not born in the purple can.

But other thoughts claimed his attention for days to come; the villa and domestic concerns had to be neglected for cogent reasons, and forlorn Arabel, with sweet and winning resignation to the inevitable, contented herself with a luncheon, a dinner, even a snatched half-hour in her remorseful lord's society, combining these golden joys with the more material satisfaction of shopping, opera and theater-going. On these occasions she was gently and unobtrusively affectionate, beautifully dressed and artistically made up; and on the last, she turned before passing out into the hall to get into her motor car and clung to him with a movement of genuine, passionate feeling, that went to his heart.

"Good-by," she whispered sighingly, "good-by, Zorzi, my own Zorzi!" and with her handkerchief to her eyes—which had not been made up for tears—fled through the hall and into the shadowed car, too quickly almost for him to follow and hand her in, while he murmured: "Sunday, darling, Sunday, though the heavens fall," his own eyes moist with pity, too moist to observe a suppressed grin on the face of the man at the door, or the exchange of a wink with another behind the master's back.

A few days later Hugh Mascott received an urgent request for half an hour's private talk from George, whom he found in a state of furious agitation, striding up and down

the library in his house, and for some moments unable to tell the cause of his message.

"They may strike at me," he shouted at last, "but by Heaven, they shan't strike at her, the mean curs! Let them spit out their venom as they will and say what they like of my private life—but my wife—hands off, there!"

Then Hugh partly divined what was coming and wished he was anywhere but there to see his friend's anguish.

"Dunstan," George went on, naming a Labor member, a genuine working-man whom he had asked to lunch and spend a Sunday afternoon on the river; "Dunstan can't visit me—because my wife isn't good enough for his. Dunstan!"

"He would naturally be rather a stickler—h'm—rather prejudiced," Hugh stammered. "A strict Nonconformist—don't you know——"

"Needn't be an unspeakable ass or an insulter and defamer of women—much less of such a woman——"

"You see, old chap, he doesn't understand—to tell the truth, a good many of us don't *quite* understand—h'm—your contempt for—ah—conventionalities——"

"*What* conventionalities?" George asked with cold incisiveness.

"Well!—marrying a *divorcée*—oh, of course quite innocent, but not in the world's eyes—quixotic and splendid—but—ah—not worldly wise. That, I conjecture, sets the multitude babbling, and things grow as they pass from mouth to mouth. Again, was it wise to assume the courtesy title disowned by the family—especially when it is known that the real Lady Arabel is long dead?"

"Nothing of the kind is known, because it is an invention—part of their cruel oppression of an innocent and helpless woman."

"Then if you can prove that, dear old boy, I think you

should. My wife's mother, you doubtless know, was a Fitzhenry."

He shook his head in negation, but the pallor that had come over his features at Hugh's reference to conventional morality, deepened. He remembered the deception of the widowhood, and many perplexing inconsistencies in Arabel's biography rose from oblivion and stabbed him.

"Dunstan was libelous," he continued, "I shall prosecute him. He said it was known *who* my wife was at Vienna—that it was matter of common gossip. He said that Wyvering knew and recognized her. And why not? She was in Vienna at one time. Have you heard any such story, Hugh?"

"I have heard some such reports. And I know that they are doing you harm. Dear old boy, I don't know what to advise you. Libel prosecutions do more harm than good."

"*Who* does Wyvering say she is, Hugh? There may be some accidental likeness to somebody, of course; and Arabel may be able to put me on her track when I know *who* the person is. You can't fight in the dark."

"The story, I have heard—is"—the words came as if dragged forcibly from him one by one—"Countess Birinski."

"Birinski?" George's hands went up to his head in bewildered agony; he turned sick and staggered, then fell heavily into a chair, while Hugh turned away, heart-struck.

"The woman in the notorious Von Andern case?" George whispered hoarsely at last.

"She was accused of hypnotising the victim, you remember, but was acquitted," Hugh said gently, himself almost as pale as George.

"The infamous liar!" he shouted.

"Hold on, George, steady, lad. There *is* some slight resemblance, most unfortunately, to your wife."

"*You* saw the resemblance?—have seen Birinski?" he groaned.

"Dear old boy," he replied, grasping George's hand firmly in his own trembling one and seeing cold beads of agony starting on his friend's broad, clear forehead, "it was years ago, when her photograph was everywhere. I was at Vienna and saw and heard much. If Wyvering were brought face to face with your wife, he might see his mistake and be able to deny his assertion."

"It will be forced down his lying throat in any case—the cowardly blackguard," he cried, starting up and pacing the room, kicking obstacles out of his way. Then, of a sudden, he seemed to give way all over at once and crumble together in a heap, like a tower sapped at the foundations.

CHAPTER III

"HOW can one person have an accidental likeness to two people of two different nationalities?" George asked fiercely, later; "the Fitzhenrys deny their sister's identity in the face of her resemblance to them, and at the same time brand her with infamy because of some slight likeness to a notorious . . . I never saw Birinski or any picture of her—but surely she was said to be dark. My wife is fair. What points did you see, Hugh?"

"Color is barred from black and white. Else there were the same splendid masses of wavy hair—and the same features, and—" he was going to add "eyes and expression," but forbore. "There is, to me, a suggestion of hypnotic power in your wife's very beautiful eyes; perhaps that has struck others and may be the foundation of the whole story. Hypnotism is not a very usual gift; but it is not unique. You have it, dear old chap, in some degree; else I shouldn't have been ass enough to let out that I'd seen this shadow of a likeness. But you know where you are now, and when you have got a few facts, especially about her life in Vienna, from your wife without hurting her by knowledge of the slander, we may be able to find some way of shutting people's mouths. Dunstan had better be ignored, if I might venture to advise."

"What *will* he do?" Sylvia asked, when she heard this story. "What can she have told him? Stella Fitzhenry thinks there is every probability of her being Lord Clamboyne's daughter—the likeness is so marked—but not his wife's daughter."

"But you are like the last Lord Clamboyne, Sylvia."

"Naturally. One is often like one's uncle. But she is certainly not his wife's daughter. We all know that Aunt Augusta was innocent and that her own poor girl died abroad —somewhere in Austria. She would have been over thirty if she had lived. Clamboyne and Stella used to be allowed to see her occasionally. They both remember her. She was more like Aunt Augusta; there was very little of the Fitzhenrys in her."

What George did was to order a car and go straight to the villa, where he arrived in the fading splendor of a mid-summer evening, all dew and flower-scent and soft, lingering dusk, silencing a nightingale, the last of the year, with the buzz and warning horn of the motor, and springing out and into the honeysuckled, rose-wreathed porch almost before the wheels were still.

The silence and dewy peace, the calm of the emerald-and-silver river flowing by, its surface broken into ripples with the musical dip of oars from a solitary boat, quieted and reassured him for a moment. He drew a deep breath of cool air rich with scents of new-mown hay from the flower-starred swaths in a meadow near; impossible to believe the unthinkable suggestions of those nightmare slanders here, at the sweet hour that they had so often spent so blissfully together. A grasshopper was chirping; he heard the cuckoo—she used to mock the cuckoo so charmingly—his clear call hoarse now with a whole season's repetition of his one glad phrase, and sleepy with the day's decline.

Her little dog was not there to fly out with his usual joyous bark to meet him; there was no glimmer of light from the dusky heart of the house, no note of music, as so often, nor any sound of voices; nor did the strange spell associated with the very thought of her presence fall upon him, as he stepped across the shadowed hall, where deep

carpeting silenced every footfall. The drawing-room was empty, the windows shut and blinded, the air heavy with the gathered hot scents of a sunny day; in the dimness a bowl of faded white roses showed like the ghosts of lost pleasures; in the dining-room was no preparation for dinner, nor any sign of one past. He called and his voice echoed sadly through empty rooms. He sprang up the wide stair, as he had done on the night of the baffled burglary. After all, in spite of a full staff of servants, the place was not very safe for Arabel, and here, in the dusky corridor, was a lovely, inlaid chest of drawers half open and evidently newly ransacked, with odds and ends strewn about it on the carpet.

With a deadly fear he broke into her room, her special sanctum, and shot up the doubled blinds to see in the fading light a litter of packing strewn about, bits of tumbled tissue-paper, labels, things rejected and flung aside, a scarf, a hat no longer quite fresh, soiled white gloves; and, before there was time to put a meaning to this, came a sudden shriek of laughter and the noisy irruption of two figures chasing each other through the corridor, a man and a maid, both freezing to still propriety at his own appearance in the pale light thrown on the doorway through the windows.

"Well, I never. I beg pardon, sir," from the flustered maid, hastily arranging her hair, while the man suddenly and discreetly vanished down a side passage; "you did give me a start, so unexpected, the family being away. I was just going round the rooms to—shut up and draw down the blinds."

"Lady Arabel has not come home yet?" he asked, divining the strange fact that she had gone away for a day or two without telling him, and then remembering that she must have written to him at one of his clubs. "Where is Louise?"

"Louise is with her ladyship, sir. Anyhow she said she was going to stick to her," she added in a controversial tone.

"Where *is* her ladyship?" he repeated coldly. "Her ladyship, knowing how deeply I am engaged with important affairs just now and not wishing to disturb me, has probably sent the letter or message she promised me to some wrong address, or perhaps Louise forgot to have it posted. So you see, I expected to find her ladyship still here, and am not sure where she may have gone for the change she talked of taking."

"Her ladyship never said where she was going, sir, more didn't Louise. Louise was always close, you couldn't ever get anything out of her. Close as wax she was."

"Was." He seemed to lose all feeling in the dreadful conviction closing slowly and surely upon him, like an up-rolling thunder-cloud; yet the conviction took no special form. It was but of vague disaster. She was gone; whither, why or when, impossible to tell; she was gone and somehow had missed telling him—perhaps by mischance.

The maid only knew that three days since a motor-car had buzzed up to the door with "one of the gentlemen" in it, her ladyship's brother, she thought. Oh, no, not Lord Clamboyne; it was the gentleman with the foreign name nobody could ever pronounce. Her ladyship and the little dog had gone off in it, for a drive they supposed, but had not returned. Louise had followed later in a taxi with the luggage. She said they might be away for some days and were going North, to some Scotch place, she thought. Letters and telegrams were not to be forwarded. "Louise did say as it was to meet you, sir, they were going," the maid added. "That was why it gave me such a start, seeing you all of a sudden, thinking you was in Scotland."

He asked no questions after "the gentleman with the foreign name," but let her tell her tale and dismissed her without comment. Then he examined the empty rooms slowly, methodically and completely, and with every fresh discovery

the thought grew that it was a nightmare that would soon be shaken off in that one wild effort that can never be made. Everything portable and of value was gone; every strictly personal belonging, including a photograph of himself in a silver frame. Her own, smiling that strange, enthralling, repellent smile, the pendant to his, remained in its place in his study, enthroned on the writing-table. The sight of it roused him to fury; he dashed it on the floor and stamped the beautiful, hateful face out of recognition. Then he sat down at the table, his head in his hands and a great remorse in his heart. "Belle," he sighed, "Belle." He was a beast to suspect that dear, injured saint.

The table drawer was not quite shut. Strange; he had never missed locking it before; it held a store of banknotes and gold in an inner division that opened with a spring; it held—but it held them no more. Burglary? But he had the key, and the lock had not been picked.

In the red afterglow, stealing through this west window, he saw a white square sealed and addressed; and, turning up the light with a quivering hand, he read in the writing he knew so well, large and bold with flourished capitals:

"ZORZI MIO,

"You are the only man I ever loved. And I never thought I could love one; they are all such beasts. Only not you, dear; you are worth them all. But I could not stand the dullness; I can't be straight for long together even for you, Zorzi, I took the wrong turning too early. So good-by, darling. Don't bother about me. You'll soon forget. Best get a divorce.

"Ever and never your own,

"ARABEL."

The pains of death took hold upon him as he read in the fading light; the palace of enchantment built up by the

Lamia who had fascinated him fell crumbling to nothing about him, leaving not a dust behind; the mysteriously beautiful eyes that had so captivated him dwindled to the small and piercing glitter of a snake's as in the old fable, and all the sensuous beauty of the enchantress, the tower-like throat, the statuesque bust and arms, revolted and filled him with mental and physical nausea. Sounds of laughter, scraps of singing and the irruption from an unseen boat of a group of pleasure-seekers upon the shadowed lawn they hurried across into the house, where the merriment was suddenly checked to whispering murmurs, made a sort of Bacchante-like accompaniment, most fitting to the close of the Dionysiac episode that had dishonored and ravaged his life and torn his befooled and humiliated heart.

All was gone, and by his folly and falsehood to his own ideals. Beautiful and true love had been his and he had thrown it away for what had been little more than sensuous gratification; an honorable alliance, bringing high and politically useful connections, had been in his grasp and involved his faith, and because it offered no gain, and ignorance had blinded him to its worldly value, he had rejected it for the sake of a nameless and penniless adventuress who had plundered, dishonored and betrayed him. He had been such an utter fool.

Perhaps in this wild moment that was the bitterest drop in his bitter cup. That he had broken faith with the woman he loved and the ideals he had cherished and pursued with lifelong striving, had inflicted cruel suffering on the pure and tender heart of the woman who had stooped to love him so faithfully, and degraded himself to political falsehood and time-serving, joining hands in the country's iniquity, hardly touched him yet in the utter overthrow of his ambition, pride and happiness, and the stinging consciousness of the figure of scorn he must make to the world,

especially to the two he loved with undying love, Sylvia and Hugh. Occasional stifled bursts of laughter from the back regions, the shriek of a distant train, the weird hooting of an owl in the ivy, where the supposed burglar had made his rapid descent on that spring evening, even the suppressed chuckle of a wakened blackbird; all seemed jeers and gibes at his unutterable folly and degradation, and suggested the chuckling and sarcastic witticisms, lifted eyebrows and meaning glances in clubs, guffaws and coarse innuendoes at drinking bars, the uplifted hands and eyes of Puritan propriety; and the gratified palates of libertines; interrupted speeches at popular meetings, Dunstan's pious sniffs and malicious hints, and damning defenses and veiled contempt in newspapers. He could never again lift up his head, never again meet men's eyes, never more be what he had been or do what he had set out to do. This was his first and great and final overthrow.

He sat there long in the faint light of the unblinded room, while the long summer afterglow faded and star after star pierced the pale, soft sky, the letter crushed in his hand, the portrait ground under his foot, and it was his heart that was crushed and all his life that was ground to pieces with the glass and the evil beauty of the face. And when the house was shut and silent and the last footfall of the last servant going round to lock up had died away, he made further and complete examination of drawers, closets and boxes, turning out unpaid bills for dress, cosmetics, unguents and beauty preparations, things of the very existence of which he was ignorant; for these he drew and inclosed checks.

He found other papers and letters that made his blood boil and were promptly burned, and with his own hands cleared away the litter and closed drawers, boxes and wardrobes in a sort of mad fury to destroy every vestige of the contaminating presence of the witch-woman now hated in pro-

portion to the infatuation she had cast upon him. From the moment of his yielding to that soft, rich murmur of Zorzi on the Campanile he had descended steadily and continuously to the moral fenlands in which he was now floundering and sinking; she had appealed to and stimulated the baser part of his nature and quenched all that was higher and nobler in him. A memory of red-cheeked, red-armed, wholesome Susie Welland came like a breath of fresh sea-air; she had been the salvation of his boyhood; Kitty Burns had kept him clear of the snares and pitfalls of adolescence and roused him to pure ideals and high aspirations; even sweet and simple Ethel Bantock had been a gentle antiseptic influence, comforting, domestic, a little enervating.

But Sylvia had given all these and much more, inspiration, intellectual companionship, stimulus and support. She charmed, braced, refreshed, soothed; she made silent incessant demand for highest standards of honor and truth, things, alas, too high for the hard necessities of political life under democratic rule. Not even the physical appeal in Sylvia's beauty could degrade; "sacred and sweet was all I saw in her." And he had loved and still loved her with a holy undying love, such as no other ever did or could awake in him. Yet he had left her for this woman. At last in the dizziness of these whirling thoughts he threw himself on his bed. For three days and nights he lay there, refusing food, letters and visits, and dismissing business matters with brief instructions to secretaries on plea of illness.

No one knows how these things become known, but in some manner they always do and are buzzed about more or less inaccurately to the four winds. The illness of a Cabinet Minister naturally goes into public prints, but not always or often his domestic sorrows and humiliations; yet the fact that George Darrell's wife had left him was busily discussed by friend and foe, and at once easily divined by Hugh

Mascott, who was well aware that when he recommended his friend to ask a denial of the Birinski slander he was bringing about a crisis that could scarcely have another ending.

"You bit off considerable more than you could chew, Belle, when you brought Lady Arabel face to face with her affectionate brother and all that crew of lords," Louise commented with her usual elegance on her lady's departure from the riverside villa. "Her ladyship and even her wrongful disinheritance went down well enough in the States and done not so badly in hotels round Europe—so long as you kept clear of the real English stuff. What did I tell ye at Venice that time? And Wyvering knowing us first sight, too; though he never let on then."

"Oh, shut up! as if I didn't know what a fool I was. And I'd go back to him tomorrow if he'd have me, Lou. Well, you needn't complain; for where could you have done better for yourself? I suppose it was Clamboyne. He was very fond of Arabel, Mother always said. And when Wyvering sprang the Birinski business upon him, it was too much and he set the police to work. How like a man and a brother. For he *is* my brother as sure as ever you're my sister. But they can't touch me. So that's done and ended."

"Ah, Belle! but you are a first-grade artist, after all. And you'll do many a good part yet, my girl. Don't you be afraid."

"Her mother," Hugh was telling Sylvia at the same moment, "was a circus-rider, in a Parisian company, when Lord Clamboyne became acquainted with her. The *Belle Anglaise*, a daring rider and handsome and clever actress, with a strain of gypsy in her blood, was very much the rage at that time. Her children inherited more or less of her beauty and talent, Arabel much more, with the addition of her curious hypnotic power transmitted from fortune-telling gypsy ancestors, that she appears to have misused with such

tragic results as Countess Birinski in the notorious Von Andern affair in Vienna. Whether there was ever a Count Birinski does not appear, and no one knows whether there was even a Colonel Errisson. That there was, and is at the present moment, an American husband who divorced her, is quite clear, according to Clamboyne."

"Yes, the man went to Clamboyne and told him that the woman masquerading as his sister was his own divorced wife, whom he had known and married as the widow of an English naval officer. How much does poor George know? And what *will* he do, Hugh? Won't you go to him, dearest? You are more to him than all the world besides—more, I truly believe, than any woman could ever be."

Hugh went, neither because of this suggestion, nor because of any hope of being of service to his friend, but simply because it was impossible not to be at least near him in this moment of disaster.

He found a silent and desolate house, set in a frame of summer green and garden bloom, and a few half-frightened, half-suspicious servants in undress. Mr. Darrell was ill, he heard, and could see no one, no, not on the most urgent business. He had seen no creature since—since he came home three days ago. Doctor? He had seen no doctor, refused to have one sent for. He had taken no food. No use to go up to ask if he would see Mr. Mascott. All business matters were referred to town addresses.

Pushing a faintly-protesting, but obviously relieved man aside, he went upstairs and through the unfamiliar house, opening door after door upon empty rooms till he came to one shadowed by drawn blinds. There, on a tumbled bed, lit by a long moving rod of sunshine through a swaying blind, lay a dark, still figure, half-dressed, face downward and apparently unaware of his entrance. Closing the door softly, he stood a moment in doubt as to whether such

anguish ought to be intruded upon, even by a best friend, in a silence that made the rich fluting of a blackbird in the garden and the gently rustling blind of a half-opened window emphatically audible, till the rod of sunlight moving over the bed touched something that glittered beneath the relaxed right hand on the embroidered silk coverlet, when instantly, with a noiseless, cat-like spring, he pounced upon, seized and uncocked a revolver that he put quickly out of sight, before the figure had time to turn and glare, like a wild thing baulked of prey, from eyes deep-sunk in a haggard, drawn face with a three days' beard and a crown of rough, upstanding hair. For a moment he glared savagely; then, at sight of Hugh's moved, pale face, turned back again with a faint groan.

"Hullo, George," said Hugh in an everyday voice; "how are you? They said you were ill and off food and wouldn't let me come up. So I came."

"That's all right," replied a hoarse, unrecognizable voice; "no good. Best leave me——"

"Three days is a stiffish fast, old chap. Shan't I tell them to bring you some soup or something?"

"Fasting's the best cure," came in the muffled, faint voice. "No; I want nothing. It's all right—nothing."

The blackbird sang more joyously, the airy twitter of swifts sweeping by overhead and the soft rustle of the swayed blind sounded for some seconds in the silent room; then Hugh's hand closed over George's and the prostrate form on the bed quivered and the strong shoulders were shaken by a deep sob. Hugh's hand tightened; he turned his face away with a suppressed groan, and thanked kindest Heaven that he had come in time.

Perhaps even he could but half divine what that proud and strong man, with his temperamental sensitiveness to mental anguish and his physical power of supporting it, had

suffered for thirty-six hours, without rest in his humiliation. Hours that seemed years put gray in his hair and battered him from shape to shape like hammer-strokes on hot iron. All his life passed before him, showing opportunities used or misused, generous impulse and unselfish aspiration turned to ambition and sordid self-interest and the early guiding light neglected, faded and gone, leaving him derelict, at the mercy of wind and wave, with neither compass, chart nor guiding star. What special malice of Satan had sent that syren-voiced woman to the tower-top that afternoon just in the critical moment when he was turning in the right direction? And why had he been fool enough to listen to it? Ah, why, what blindness of delusion had darkened his eyes to that Duessa's true character?

Restlessly pacing the room in the late evening, he had leaned his throbbing head against the window-jamb to take the cool breeze from the river, where the rhythmic plash of oars and glimmer of passing lights revealed a boat with youth in it and a snatch of song, recalling Venice and the smooth gliding of gondolas: "You must see Venice," Sylvia had said, and he had seen it, but not with her.

How he had longed for the woman he loved and had neglected, in that dim, strange gliding over the dark canal and through winding lanes of liquid agate, with the silent, sullen gondolier. All that uplifting beauty of stone and sea and sky, all that noble art and moving historic association of the sea-sprung city, the pictured evangel of St. Mark's, the lofty peace on the brow of the sleeping doge on his tomb and the face of the living workman at prayer, how deeply that had moved and inspired him; and yet how easily the adventuress had turned the scale of his destiny and cast him, desolate and ruined, a scorn and a hissing, down this abyss of humiliation and misery, the tool and the fool of that thing of infamy! He had never loved her,

had even been revolted by her, yet had succumbed to selfish gratification, flattery, all that was basest in him. Even that poor degraded creature might fare better than he at the last great day; there was at least a leaven of unselfish devotion in her undoubted passion for him. How easily he had yielded to her base counsels, sordid aims, mean desires and ruinous extravagance, that added the burden and shame of debt to his misery. And how transparent her deceits and snares had been, the title, the estates, that impossible maid, her accomplice! How escape, how end all this corroding mass of misery and disgrace?

Nothing was left, there was no way to turn, none. Only the kind unconsciousness of death remained; that last refuge of despair beckoned with sweet insistence. The calm, cool river was flowing by with a whisper of rest. Just to drop from the window, like the baffled burglar—was he a burglar, after all?—when the house was asleep and no one was there to see him cross the lawn and spring into that dark liquid peace, burbling and murmuring by through the willow weeds and kingcups. But—to be stranded on some muddy foreshore or marshy shallow, tangled in water-weed, bedraggled and stained? No. If it were the sea, the fresh, salt sea, rolling deep and strong as at the foot of Deersleap Cliff, then to hide in that wide, clear blueness and be seen no more—There was no sleeping-draught at hand. Razors were a clumsy, mangling business. But that revolver in the drawer—it was hers for some fantastic, forgotten purpose; she was fairly handy with it—it was found in the morning and loaded. No one would care, not one.

But there was no hurry. One might drowse a little, knowing the end so sure and being so dead tired. Swallows twittered under the eaves as they used to, when he waked in dewy mornings, at the little diamonded window at home. There was a scent of those old clover fields in the air; a

sound of bells, too—Deerswell church bells, bringing the great thoughts that used to come in drowsy sermon-time in the beautiful old church; deep organ thunders in St. Paul's, the voices echoing and mocking the preacher's moving words in the dome, that first sweet Sunday with Sylvia, the look on her face, the hush, the beauty, the stir left by vanished music, the sudden contempt under the preacher's eloquence for happiness, the glory of denial for great ends and their discussion of these things in those golden moments together on the cathedral steps; with many, how many, pleasant discussions of such high matters, of all that is vital and inspiring, together. And he had bartered this birthright for that mess of pottage.

St. Mark's again and the working man's uplifted face of awe and trust, adoration and peace passing all understanding. That phrase from Mendelssohn's St. Paul, "Happy and blest are they that have endured, for, though the body die, the soul shall live forever." Sylvia used to play it to him. She had loved him—once, when he was the People's Man, still following great aims and moved by unselfish aspirations, when ardent moments of high communion and golden gleams of faith and eternal hope were still his—before he had caught at that lure of red pottage and flung away the blessing and birthright in his madness.

It was the agony of Esau when he sought the lost blessing vainly and with tears, the bitter cry that had pierced the heart of his childhood in Jim's beautiful voice in Deerswell church. "Hast thou but one blessing? Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

But there could be no blessing for the man-slayer. The fingers clenched on the revolver relaxed; the burden of life must be taken up again, the awful solitude of heart and soul borne.

It was then that the door opened softly but audibly in the

stillness; there was a light step, a presence, some servant, perhaps, then that sudden spring, the revolver snatched and that moved pale face of Hugh looking straight into his heart; and when at last the firm, strong grasp of his friend's hand took his, he knew that it was bringing him back from death to life, as surely as his own roped hold round Hugh's body had drawn him safely to the top of Deersleap Cliff.

CHAPTER IV

THE minister's indisposition passed so quickly that it was scarcely observed. The day after Hugh's visit found him in the usual routine, but with gray hair and a new look in his sharpened features. That difficulty of looking people in the face again had been overcome; but he did it with a reserve and reticence that gave distinction to his naturally robust and confident bearing.

"You can because you will, George Darrell; you will because you can," had taken more becoming shape; his will now was to bear bitter and deserved humiliation and not let it crush him. Happiness was gone, he could do without it; shame was his, he could bear it, in a strength far above and beyond that glorious exultant energy, the pagan "will to power," that the consciousness of great natural gifts had once evoked in him.

One of the first people he met—and it was by chance at the beloved house in Piccadilly—was Sylvia, who happened to be waiting for Margaret in the dear familiar room where the Rag had so often been put into its weekly mold. He had been shown into the room by mistake, his visit being not to Margaret but Jim. There she was as of old, pale and fragile, but lovely and sweet as in golden youth, the Sylvia who was to have been his, with all the remembered charm enhanced by a sacred aloofness because she was Hugh's. Yet her being Hugh's was pain and sorrow, since it made another barrier to intimacy between friends otherwise so strongly bound in heart and hope.

Sylvia had told Hugh once when he spoke of his long

waiting that if she had liked him less then she might have loved him more. Her love for George had long been killed, though it was impossible to forget those years of romance and betrothal, still more impossible not to resent the insult of being left for an infamous adventuress, or that she had nearly died of it and could never meet him again entirely without pain, in spite of all the pity his desolation and betrayal moved in her. Yet it came to her with an odd pleasure, that no longer loving him now, she liked him more than ever, with the old maternal liking that had taken so long to give place to a love that had died so hard.

They were both too much startled by the unexpected meeting to restrain the feeling shining in the direct, surprised glance of each.

"George," she exclaimed, holding out her hands on the first cordial impulse, "dear George."

He bowed over the hands he pressed in an eloquent silence and they stood thus face to face for a moment, the clear brown depths of Sylvia's eyes full of a pity too tender and reverent to hurt.

"Who breaks, pays," he said. "I've been mad, Sylvia, mad for years"—she flushed hotly, resentful of the implied allusion to what was best forgotten—"but I am sane now, sane and sad."

"That sermon under the dome," she replied gently; "what was said that evening is true. There is something better than happiness. And you have a career before you and many warm friends, especially two——"

"The best friend I ever had or ever can have, to whom I owe most in all my life, is in this room," he said, and her resentment passed.

Margaret came in then, with a little start of surprise at finding him, to hear that his visit was for Jim; and her handclasp and welcome, though not so cordial and heart-

stirring as Sylvia's, had a comfort that made his eyes moist with the assurance that his old friends were opening their hearts to him again; and he wondered how he could ever have dared to bring that witch-woman in contact with such as these. Then Jim came in and gave him one of his most agonizing fist-crushes and talked about the weather excitedly for five minutes on end.

"I came to talk about *Without Prejudice,*" George said, when the weather torrent slackened. "I ought to have given up the conduct of it long ago."

"Give up *Without Prejudice?* You can't. The thing is impossible. It can't go on without you."

"You said that about the Rag, but it was not a penny the worse for want of me."

"Ah, the Rag was really Sylvia's. You made nothing of it till she took it in hand and put it in a condition to run by itself. What did I know about newspapers? There was not even an editor's salary till she stepped in and hammered into me that it was robbery and idiocy combined to allow a man of genius to waste precious time and energy in slaving at the management of a great paper with the salary of an office boy. She made me sit in that chair and write a letter and draw a check before she would leave the room. Such excellent common sense, so unusual in a woman, and such genius, too. There's nobody like her, Darrell, nobody. So gifted, yet so womanly and so lovely. 'A spirit yet a woman, too.' She wrote that paper on Wordsworth in last week's issue, by the way."

George neither listened nor replied for a moment. His cheeks burned at the thought that the ample salary that had made all his subsequent success possible was due to Sylvia. He fully realized now what Jim and Margaret had always recognized, that Sylvia had made and molded him long before she gave him the treasure of her love to throw away in

his eager race for place and power. Then he told Jim that he must give up *Without Prejudice* because he could no longer support its political views.

"But, my dear chap, it has no views at all, much less political ones," Jim returned, "that's why it exists, to support nothing, maintain nothing, especially not politics."

"Well, your politics—your ideas?"

"Mine? I never had any and never shall. I don't know anything about politics and don't want to."

"Yet you were pretty keen about the Peaceful Persuasion Bill."

"That was not politics. That was justice. It was indignation at the degradation of the People, making a licensed tyranny of labor combinations and putting them above and beyond law, as your crowd did with that measure. Look at them now; look at their suicidal strikes, their increasing revolt even against their chosen leaders, their lawlessness and repudiation of their own contracts. Of course I was against that measure. But not from politics, from love of the People."

"Dear Lord Wycherley, I have the misfortune—or fault—to be a politician, and represent a party, and I am afraid I have identified *Without Prejudice* with the expression and support of that party's politics. I had no right to do so and am bound in honor and justice to give it up."

Jim understood only in part; the magnitude of the offense could not reach him. George was a little off his balance, he thought: the shock of domestic calamity had disturbed his sense of proportion; he saw things in an exaggerated light. He could not think badly of the man he loved, the People's Man, the justification and embodiment of all he saw and maintained of the intellect and capacity latent and wasted in the toiling, unprivileged masses, fated to hew wood and draw water all their days for the more privileged.

It was not all fancy that made George feel, in the manner of so many with whom he came in contact in those first desolate days, an unusual cordiality and kindness. He felt and bitterly resented that his marriage had ostracized him and put him at a distance even from those with whom his intercourse was purely impersonal. His reception at meetings even of his own Land Tenure Reform Association had been growing cooler and cooler; but now in friendly glances, the warm pressure of hands long withheld, the very tone of voices, he felt that the coolness was vanishing and this helped to hold him up in the swamp of misery and humiliation through which he had to pass. It even gave him a faint, far-off hope that he might yet be strong enough to lead either without party or with one of his own creating. Disraeli had evolved a new type of conservatism and laid the foundations of imperialism; was the Jew boy so much more capable than the village boy? But there was to be no more climbing, no more compromise or subservience, nothing but clean, straight dealing and plain duty though the heavens fell.

Mr. Waytansey had been almost worse over the resignation than Jim over the editorship. It was no time for changes in the Cabinet. Every energy must be devoted to breasting present difficulties; all must pull loyally together. The measure now arousing such fierce controversy, and hitherto so warmly advocated and stoutly supported by Mr. Darrell, once passed and the country calmed, changes might be contemplated, not before. What if he had always disliked certain clauses? The Bill must be passed whole; it could not be clipped at the option of individuals. To go against the measure in its entirety at this eleventh hour would be to falsify his whole political past; it would be more—it would be betrayal. Private feelings had to be sacrificed, ministers must keep together and pull together. Clouds black with war were gathering on the European horizon; labor troubles

and complications were increasing at home; strong men were needed in the Government. Let him pause and consider before taking a step that must put an end to his career, besides adding to the embarrassments of a ministry already overcharged with grave responsibilities; let him wait and see.

Others reminded George that he was the People's Man or nothing. No Conservative Government, supposing such an anachronism were possible, could ever admit a Labor member. Besides, in renouncing the leadership and taking office he had made a long and definite step away from Labor and identified himself with Liberalism, so Mr. Hesitage told him.

And that, the People's Man now clearly saw, was why Mr. Waytansey had beguiled him into the Cabinet and was so firmly bent on keeping him in that gilded cage. In his base clutch at the lure of office he had deserted, instead of advancing, the cause to which he was dedicated. "Just for a handful of silver he left" it and the ribbon of Right Honorable to stick on his name. And his fault was not lessened by the fact that he could now no longer support Labor principles, or belong to any existing party.

"You must come to us as a Tory Democrat," Hugh said.

"I am not a Tory, nobody is in these days, and I hate democracy," he objected.

"But democracy is here; it must be made the best of," Hugh returned. "After all, there is little difference between the two great parties. Both want reform, the Conservatives gradually, with safeguards; the Liberals suddenly and with violent disruption."

"It is not principles that divide them," George said; "it is class antagonism. While the People were chiefly rural and the strife for power was between the aristocracy and the middle classes, the highest and lowest classes, especially land-owners and agricultural laborers, could join hands against the middle classes and Tory democracy was possible.

But now that the People are chiefly urban and power rests between the middle classes and the plutocrats, the middle-class goes more and more to the wall, and the strife is chiefly and increasingly between capital and labor. The struggle for supremacy threatens to be entirely between materialism, represented by the physical forces of labor, whether of commerce, manufacture or agriculture, and intellect—represented by the professions, the higher ranks of the services, scholars, scientists and inventors, men of art and literature, and great employers of labor. All these are capitalists more or less. The working classes, being the most numerous, though least capable, are getting too great a share of power."

"My dear chap, you have come a long way from your starting-point."

"I have. I have come to see that power should not be in the hands of the most numerous, but the most capable. I have come to see that power is not the most desirable possession, either for a class or an individual. Nor is material enjoyment. I have also come to see that there must be class divisions and distinctions, though they need not be antagonistic."

"But are they, in this country?"

"Certainly. The upper classes from jealousy lest their long-developed ideals and traditions should be debased and their status lowered by invasion of their ranks from below. The lower classes from envy of the superiority and advantages they think filched from them by some mysterious subtlety of their rulers. So I used to think. But the meek inherit the earth. They can and do enjoy the world's wealth, without possessing it. Mind, I don't say the division is fair and I don't suppose it ever will be, but it may be made more equal and equitable."

"That's where, I believe, most of our side stand. Which side has done the most to protect and lighten the lot of labor? And which Chamber?"

"Didn't I tell you he would be on our side before long?" Hugh asked Sylvia later with great triumph, when this colloquy with the People's Man was discussed.

"But will he?" She shook her head, smiling. "He never was and never will be at heart a party man."

"Wait and see," Hugh said very wisely and both smiled.

"Besides, as he saw long ago, party government has had its day."

"I see that, too. And we agree in seeing that representative government is an illusory, unworkable scheme, except in a broad, general sense, like the old three estates he and his party have been so busy abolishing."

When first George Darrell laid the question of his accepting office before his party, opinions had been on the whole hostile to that course of action; it was only with difficulty and by virtue of his strong will, adroit persuasiveness and powerful personal magnetism that he had brought the greater part of them round to his view of the situation. But when it came to his resigning they felt that they were being betrayed, that their power and prestige was injured; once there, he should stop to guard and advance their interests. He was returning to them, not as a penitent prodigal, but as an unsuccessful and inefficient general, a bad penny. They had no further use for him.

But it was not because of his lost influence that he meant to accept the Chiltern Hundreds and perhaps seek reëlection as a free lance. He had fallen, perhaps never to rise again but to drag out the prime of his life in obscurity, even indigence. He would at least die fighting, and his confidence in his capacity was as firm, if not as joyous and exuberant, as ever. He had stripped himself of office and the power the editorship of a great journal gives, and of the emoluments of both. He would probably have to resign the presidency and membership of his own Land Tenure Reform League and

begin all over again, plowing his lonely furrow, if indeed so much as a plow were left him to handle in the public field, and he was content, for the first time in his life. What if his true vocation were a priest's? Or what if he were destined to be the initiator of some great social or national movement? It was not his to choose, his only honestly and steadfastly to follow the inner light.

His resignation of office had not yet been accepted, though various rumors of it had found their way into the papers; and he had neither appeared at his office nor in the House for some time, when he fulfilled a promise of speaking at a meeting in the large industrial center in the North, a section of which he represented. This was part of a long-planned campaign of his own Land Tenure Reform. Steelchester folk, he perceived from the manner of his reception upon the platform on that occasion, had fallen considerably from their first love, though they still had a kind corner in their hearts for him. This falling-off would have stirred him deeply and called out all the forces of battle in him at one time; but tonight it neither depressed nor elevated him; it was only a fact to be reckoned with. Through the little surge of clapping that saluted his appearance he fancied a groan, even a faint booing; there certainly were whispered comments and derisive laughter, of which looks and gestures indicated him as the subject. This sort of thing was in the bill; if the item was bitter, it had been earned. He met the jesters' eyes with a grave and composed sadness that rebuked more than one. All were more or less impressed by the change in their former idol's face, on which sharp suffering had left its mark; and as business progressed and the beautiful and familiar voice made itself heard from time to time, the old magnetic charm resumed its spell and his sins were forgotten.

But what was this that their charmed spirits were lulled

into only half hearing? He seemed to be condoning the Enclosures Acts, that had wrought such misery to country laborers, and excusing those who profited by them and denying any forcible and uncompensated expropriation. Nor was it fraudulent, he said, nor were the results, the poverty and social descent of field laborers and enrichment of landowners, foreseen or calculable. It had been inevitable, because the new and rapidly growing industrial population of the towns had to be fed; it was more disastrous to smallholders than it might have been, because it coincided with the Great War, and was followed by unfortunate legislation in the shape of the old Poor Laws and the Corn Laws, both devised to remedy the poverty following the war. The Golden Age of Agriculture, as well as the black period preceding it, had occurred in the height of the great landowners' political power. It was doubtful if any oligarchy had ruled more justly and wisely than that landed aristocracy, whose rule coincided with the climax of Victorian prosperity and splendor—here the cup of his iniquity boiled over, and repressed indignation found vent in a storm of "Noes"—certainly the power entrusted to these land-owners had been on the whole conscientiously exercised and the duties and obligations inherent to the nature of their property amply fulfilled.—"No! No!"—Justice compelled this admission; it did not follow that an oligarchy consisting of this or any class was either right or desirable (a few voices, "Hear, hear"). That oligarchy was a thing of the past (cheers). Was that which succeeded it any better? (half-suppressed murmurs). He thought not, but the present unsatisfactory condition of land laborers and land tenures was not to be attributed, certainly not in any great measure, to bad landlords. Different and well-considered legislation might, and he hoped would, prove a palliative if not a remedy. For that purpose their Association existed; its object was by careful study and investi-

gation to discover the malady of the existing system of land tenures and find a remedy for it.

Upon this the local president interposed to say that the right honorable gentleman was using language and expressing views very different to what they had been accustomed to hear from him, and very far from the truth, namely, that the whole system of land tenure was rotten and must be cleared away root and branch, that the landed aristocracy was a close and selfish tyranny, battening on the misery of the laborer, to whom the land rightly belonged. Their President seemed to have deserted them and their cause, forgetful of the great fundamental principle of the society of which he was the founder, that English land was the inalienable possession of the English people.

George, rising to reply, was met by a storm of indignation, cries of, "Rat," "Parasite," and from one voice—Lady Arabel's husband—this last sent the blood from his face and a flash to his eye. Beginning again, he was shouted down with such tumult as obliged the chairman to threaten to break up the meeting. George was now quite conscious that the *Daily Garbler's* "Violent Attack on Mr. Darrell," which he had seen placarded on his way down, had found a sympathetic echo in his own stronghold at Steelchester, and that the moment for announcing his resignation of office and intended acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds was come.

The *Garbler's* attack, called "The Rat's Progress," was an imaginative and plain-spoken biographical sketch of the People's Man. He was a glib-tongued demagogue, a social waif, educated by the charity of that aristocracy to which he had always been a parasite, and eventually but vainly tried to ally himself. An adroit and unscrupulous journalist, he had wormed himself into the confidence of the Labor party by professing their political and social creed, and was by them chosen to represent them in Parliament. Once there, both

Labor and socialist principles were secretly jettisoned, and an underhand and growing subservience to the Liberal party, carefully masked from his own, was at last rewarded by admission to office. By accepting this, he adroitly persuaded the Labor party, who had been too easily blinded by his subtleties and sophistries, he would at once safeguard those Labor interests involved in the duties of his office, exalt and extend Labor influence, and be a drag on the increasing domination of Liberalism, while in reality he was betraying both the parties that had served him as ladders to office. A sycophant, first to Labor, then to Liberalism, this daring and unscrupulous adventurer was now—through what intrigues and for what private ends who could tell?—deserting both, and leaving a Cabinet, already severely shaken, at a most critical moment of its existence. Such was the bare outline, illustrated by quotations from his speeches, cleverly distorted by being detached from the context. It was unjust and cruel; but it had a basis of truth, and he knew it was in great measure deserved. He had been false to himself and was applauded. He was true now and his truth was called betrayal and desertion.

When at last a hearing was secured for him, he began with a reply to the local president's assertion of the people's right to the land.

"But who are the English people?" he asked. "They are a great, a dominant, a self-ruling race, hardy, strong-willed and prolific; a race that has peopled new worlds and impressed its ideals, and sometimes its laws, upon old ones; a daring and invincible race of seafarers, whose fleets have swept the seas from pole to pole, bringing freedom in their path, and making world-wide commerce possible for all nations; a people preëminent in literature, great in learning and science, generous in temper, just and temperate in judgment, strong in its early and constant repulse of tyranny, loyal,

manly and true to its simple cult of duty; a people with a glorious past and a future teeming with magnificent possibility. You have called me the People's Man," he said, "and such I have striven and trust always to prove myself. Only to be one of that People is a great thing; to live for, to serve, and if necessary to die for, that gallant race, is a glorious privilege; to be among those to lead it on its just and beneficent course in the van of the armies of civilization is a more than regal destiny. But the people is not a party, neither is it a class. Princes, priests and poets, the sovereign himself, are part of the people of England. The men of the pen, those who labor while poor men sleep and idlers revel; men of science, who wrest their secrets from the silent stars above them and the hidden depths beneath, who assimilate the long-developed thought of ages, leading it into fresh channels, evolving laws of being and theories of life and conduct from the story of the past; those who bear rule and execute justice, the captains of industry, as well as the rank and file; those who lead in our schools and universities, our senates and courts of law; those who put their knowledge into practice in medicine, law, divinity; builders and road-makers, captains of agriculture, great land-owners and capitalist farmers, men who bear rule in the national services and govern our colonies and dependencies, creative artists, merchants, and all that host of clerks, distributors and superior craftsmen, that compose the lower middle classes—these, as well as the humble and undistinguished myriads, that delve in mines, till the ground, tend sheep upon lonely hills and labor with sweat of brow in factory, arsenal and forge, all these are the People of England, not the hand-working classes alone."

He paused and the low mutterings and interjected, "No, Noes" that had been gradually rising broke into a roar of dissent. "Not alone," he repeated; but further utterance was drowned in shouts of "Rat," followed by the body of one

of these animals shot from a back bench at the speaker, who avoided it by a quick turn. "You may call me a rat," he continued, while the missile alighted on a wholly innocent and unexpectant person at the back of the platform, causing his rapid and unpremeditated flight in sudden and audible indisposition, and the quick and unostentatious conveyance of the rat-thrower to the street; "but you need not make beasts of yourselves"—again he ducked, this time avoiding a rotten orange, that spluttered harmlessly against a wall behind him, amid booing and calls to order, and was followed by another summary ejection; "if by a rat you mean a man who leaves a party whose views and principles are no longer his——"

He paused, looking searchingly, almost pleadingly, from row to row of serried, angry faces, then went on:

"But what, friends, I ask, would you call a man who remained and continued to uphold and further principles and courses of conduct contrary to his own honor and conscience? Would you call him a loyal party man? I think all here would apply a harsher term to such a man. ("Hear, hear.") I think," he added, with tears in his voice, "all here would apply a very harsh term to a man who continued for any end to identify himself with principles and courses of action that he had gradually discovered to be contrary to his own individual sense of truth and justice."

The storm gradually calmed under this appeal; once more he paused, in a silence broken by low-spoken "Hear, Hears," and murmurs of assent, and, when he began again, the old spell fell upon the hushed assembly and the speaker was respectfully, if not unmurmuringly, heard to the end of his account of his gradual change of views and his announcement and explanation of his resignation, which was received in a dead silence that covered many feelings, among which regret, dismay and disappointment were not the least.

"I reckon we made tracks just about on time, Belle," com-

mented Louise, throwing down a paper in which some of these things were chronicled of the People's Man.

"None too soon," returned Lady Arabel, who was now a Russian princess, with a grievance, an unpronounceable name and Venetian hair, noticeable for marvelous and *chic* costumes, and an eager and successful player at *Petits Chevaux* in a French watering-place. "I hardly thought he would resign till that Sunday in the boat, though of course there were hints all along."

"I wonder if he ever guessed the meaning of those pleasant little after-dinner naps of his, Belle? They brought us in a pretty penny, and no mistake."

"Poor Zorzi! Yes, it was a fair haul. It went against me sometimes, though. It was hard. He was so absolutely unsuspicious. My want of interest in affairs was such a rest to him, he used to say. Only he didn't like me to be excluded from the main interest of his life. Excluded! And his eyes would shut while he was speaking, and off he would go, and out it would all come like a child's catechism answers. All that he knew, that is, and that was not near as much as was expected. After all, he was an outsider—in the Cabinet, not of it. But lately, after dear Nattie put that nice little spoke in my wheel—he'll pay for that yet, mind you—he used to resist more and throw it off too quickly. It took over ten minutes to get him under once. Nearly caught me taking it down one night. My! that was a near shave. I said you were dictating to me, and he took it in like a long-clothes babe."

"I guess he's finished, anyhow," Louise said. "Poor Zorzi, I wish we hadn't taken the dollars. What'll he do?"

"Oh, he'll do well enough, Lou. But he'll never be done by another woman. There's more in Zorzi than people think. He'll top them all yet."

Later on George's resignation and the manner of it was

being discussed at Deerham in the breathless beauty of a red-gold summer evening when the sun's rich sinking was chasing the violet haze from a quiet sea. Between gray downland and flushing sea, fields were yellowing to harvest or purpled with clover. Deerswell bells were chiming drowsily from the tree-muffled tower, scents of rose and carnation, with heavier odors of lily and myrtle-bloom, were in the still air; the old pleasant custom of coffee on the terrace was being observed, with Hugh and Sylvia as guests on the week-end holiday, from which both Lord Amberwood and Hugh had just been recalled on account of sudden urgency in public affairs.

"Whatever tomorrow's news may be, we shall want a man like George," Hugh said, his eyes on the bowery nest whence the People's Man had sprung; "if he had his hand on the rudder now——"

"What, Hugh, you mean him to be Prime Minister, after all?" his father asked, with an amused smile.

"Well—why not? He has already been a minister—and a very capable one; you might ask the men in his department. How absurd you would have thought any such possibility as that not so long ago!"

"Well, he rose like a rocket, and fizzled out like a wet one."

"Come now. There was a pretty good spread of colored stars first. But he'll rise again. Genius and character like his are not so easily fizzled out. We want strong men now, as we never wanted them before."

"The strong man always seems to come at the extremity of the crisis," Sylvia said. "Perhaps he is always there and the greatness of the need brings him out."

"There, my dear child," her father-in-law said, "we come to our old debate. Do great men mold events, or are they molded by them? Does the Man bring the Hour or the Hour the Man? And we shall never agree. And if we

are to catch the night mail, Hugh, I'll have one more cigar."

"There you are, then. I shall smoke in the train." Hugh rose and handed the box. "Yes, that strong stuff only falls to rise again, 'baffled to fight to better.' Where's Jim with the right quotation?"

"But he won't be the People's Man any more," Lady Amberwood said regretfully.

"Why not?" Hugh asked, with a confident smile; "Jim is giving him *Without Prejudice* unconditionally; what a power that will be. To Jim he is always the People's Man."

"The real People's Man," Sylvia said with gentle pride and the smile he loved, "is my husband."

"And upon my word, Sylvia," cried Margaret with enthusiasm, "I believe you are right. But they never recognize their best friends."

"Except by stoning and crucifixion," Lord Amberwood said to himself.

And even while they lingered in the charm of the summer evening's dying splendor, the world they knew and the whole scheme of things in which they had been moving had passed away, and a new era, with other conditions and unimaginable possibilities, was being evolved from the chaos. For the terrible crash that hurled the whole of European civilization, and with it our little lives and tiny hopes and fears, into the melting-pot, had come with what hissing of fury and seething of agony we hardly yet realize. And when and into what fantastic variety of mold, heroic, beautiful, trivial or base, the fused metal will run in its outpouring, and what length of Dark Ages may follow, or what slow and baffled and lovely beginnings of golden days may be, who shall say?

In the meantime, let us honor great men, and pray for wit to discern and choose them, remembering that nations are saved and made glorious, not by the weight of numbers, but by the redeeming remnant, the best few. (1)